

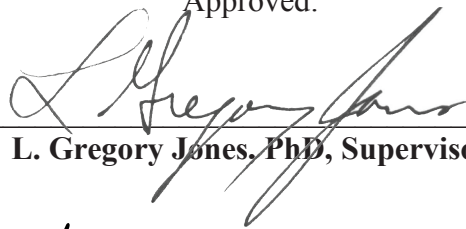
**Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation:
From Sacred Texts to Secular Acts of Diversity and Inclusion**

by

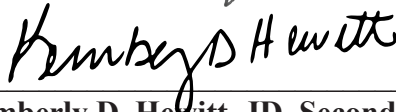
Jonathan Cunningham Augustine, JD, MDiv.

Date: March 17, 2020

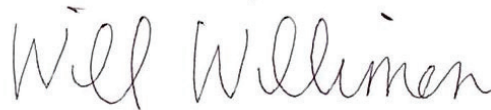
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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
in the Divinity School of Duke University

2020

ABSTRACT

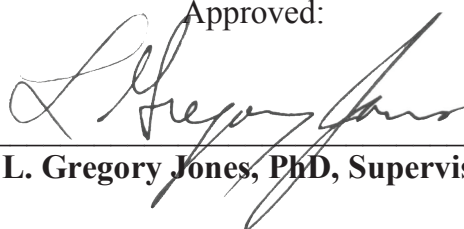
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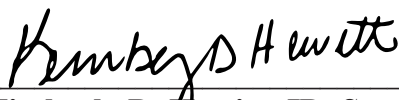
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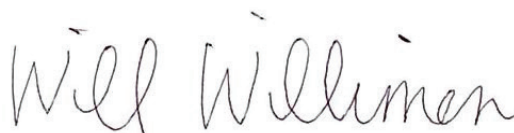
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ABSTRACT

Reconciliation is one of the few terms having widespread usage in the American lexicon, after originating in the biblical canon. Although popularly used to denote parties giving up their enmity and finding commonality, reconciliation's meaning is much deeper. In the succeeding five chapters, I move from reconciliation's theological use in sacred biblical texts, to its practical application, through diversity and inclusion principals, specifically exploring three usages of the term.

I contextualize reconciliation as *salvific*, *social*, and *civil*. The first two usages, *salvific* and *social*, are Christocentric. The third, however, *civil*, is primarily secular. *Salvific reconciliation* is the most Christocentric of the three usages. It denotes humanity being reconciled in its relationship with God *through Jesus*. Stated otherwise, it means Jesus died, was buried, and rose from the dead so humanity could receive the unmerited gift of eternal life. Argument can indeed be made that the heart of Christian theology embraces salvific reconciliation as its most fundamental tenant.

Social reconciliation, a close companion of civil reconciliation, is the focus of chapter 2. In addition to the fact that Jesus died, Jesus also lived. In relying on Peter's leadership and Paul's theology, I contextualize social reconciliation by exploring select portions Matthew, the Book of Acts, and the Pauline corpus to argue that regardless of race, ethnicity, social standing, class or gender, once one is baptized into the church, (s)he has equal social standing within the body of Christ. Stated otherwise, whereas salvific reconciliation denotes humanity being reconciled in its relationship with God, *through Jesus*, social reconciliation means humans are reconciled with one another *because of Jesus*.

Inasmuch as salvific and social reconciliation are Christocentric, chapter 3 contextualizes *civil reconciliation*, an ethic that is primarily secular. As a direct derivative of social reconciliation,

civil reconciliation embraces an egalitarian-like ethic that motivates both clergy and laity to act with prophetic resistance in challenging unjust governmental practices by seeking legal redress and equal standing. The best contextualization of civil reconciliation was Martin Luther King, Jr.'s prophetic leadership in bringing the black church into the secular politics of the Civil Rights Movement.

I argue civil reconciliation was successful, especially from an empirical perspective, as measured by the gains of diversity and inclusion associated with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the institution of affirmative action. Insofar as the old cliché is true that “every action has a reaction,” chapter 4's focus is the reaction to civil reconciliation's success, a fusion of white evangelical Christians becoming openly aligned with conservative, Republican Party politics. That fusion, initiated by Richard Nixon's southern strategy in the late 1960s and solidified under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, also eventually led to the political extremity of Donald Trump's 2016 “Make America Great Again,” a narrative that is the anthesis of reconciliation.

Trump's well-documented extremity has publicly revealed factions within evangelicalism that present opportunities to align conservative and more progressive Christians on matters that will strengthen the church universal, through diversity and inclusion principals that are consistent with the inclusiveness God progressively established in scripture. Accordingly, as a conclusion, chapter 5 asks the proverbial question, “Where Do We Go From Here?” I suggest that if the church can successfully move toward reconciliation, through diversity and inclusion practices that are consistent with God's intention, as evidenced through scripture, the church can also be an exemplar for society-at-large to move toward reconciliation, too.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND DEDICATION

There are so many individuals and institutions to whom I owe sincere thanks! Although this culminating written work is the product of my individual labor, it results from an academic, ecclesial, social, and familial support system that has encouraged and nurtured me in ways beyond my capacity of written expression. It is to them I am immeasurably thankful!!!

I entered Duke University's Doctor of Ministry program in August 2017, after ably preparing for my cohort's first residential intensive on Duke's beautiful campus. As someone deeply grounded in the Christian faith, I was especially grateful our intensive began with an intimate worship experience at Duke Chapel. In standing at the chapel's main entrance, I was drawn-in by its architectural design and ornate stone carvings depicting significant figures of influence in the history of both the church and American South. One carving was of Robert E. Lee, a general in the Confederate Army.

In what seemed like only hours after our first residential intensive began, an undercurrent of divisiveness—largely centered around race—once again enveloped the United States. It was only three months earlier, in May 2017, while serving as the national chaplain of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and senior pastor of New Orleans' Historic St. James AME Church, I led the fraternity in an organized prayer vigil to remove Confederate monuments from public view. Our nonviolent, prayerful efforts were successful in that, in a matter of days, the city's mayor removed monuments of Jefferson Davis, P.G.T. Beauregard, and Robert E. Lee. By August 2017, however, the country's temperament *was not* prayerful. It was violent.

During my first residential intensive, a violent public protest broke out in Charlottesville, Virginia that resulted in several deaths. As tensions centered around factions between white supremacist Nazis and African American protestors, the president of the United States—often

accused of being racist because of outlandish comments—stoked racial tensions by attributing fault to “both sides.” It was in the midst of this unfolding drama that I really began to understand the depths of inclusivity at Duke. President Vincent Price, who became the university’s 10th president only one month before, took the bold leadership position of having the Robert E. Lee statute removed from the chapel’s entrance. Price’s leadership was bold and also reassuring. It reassured me, as an African American male, that I was welcome at an institution that would shape my thinking and public proclamation of inclusivity. I am therefore thankful to be a part of Duke’s family.

From an institutional perspective, I am also thankful to the two congregations that supported my matriculation, Historic St. James and St. Joseph AME Church in Durham. After serving two other congregations in the Louisiana Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Bishop Julius Harrison McAllister, Sr. assigning me, a young pastor, to a very historic congregation. Historic St. James was founded in 1844 and is the first AME congregation established in the Deep South. Whereas Emanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina (site of the horrific June 2015 church massacre) was established in 1816 as the denomination’s first congregation in the South, Historic St. James was founded in 1844, in New Orleans, as the denomination’s first congregation in the Deep South.

When my predecessor retired, there was no shortage of capable ministers who desired to succeed him. To my surprise, Bishop McAllister appointed me. I am extremely thankful to Historic St. James for the way she received me and supported my ministry. We loved each other and worked together to make tremendous progress in rebuilding and rebranding the oldest predominately black, Protestant church in New Orleans. When I was originally assigned in 2015, worship was still held in the adjacent fellowship hall because of damage resulting from Hurricane Katrina, 10-years prior

to my appointment. For four years, God blessed our work. We completely renovated the church edifice, developed new ministries, and attracted many new members. From 2017 to 2019, the congregation's Board of Stewards, under Dr. Lindsey Moore's leadership, supported my studies at Duke because they believed in the value of continued education. I am thankful to have served Historic St. James.

Immediately after completing classes and beginning the yearlong research and writing that culminates with this work, I was assigned to and welcomed by the wonderful people at St. Joseph. The congregation is affectionately called a "connectional pulpit," because of its prominence and statute in the connectional AME Church. There has been no shortage of ministers who sought to serve St. Joseph over the years and, in 2019, I had no dreams of being assigned as her pastor. I am thankful to Bishop James Levert Davis for the extraordinary confidence he showed in me, believing I would be the right person at the right time. On May 4, 2019, I was transferred from the Louisiana Conference, reassigned to the Western North Carolina Conference, and appointed as the 31st pastor in St. Joseph's 150-year history. I am humbled by the opportunity and extremely thankful to the congregation.

My service through both Historic St. James and St. Joseph, in combination with my academic journey at Duke, afforded me the opportunity to work with and befriend some wonderful individuals. I am thankful to Greg Jones, the dean of Duke Divinity School and my former professor, for supervising my work in bringing this doctoral thesis to fruition. I have tremendously benefited from Greg's thought-provoking writings, insightful edits and constructive criticisms, as well as his consistent encouragement. I believe our collective efforts have produced a scholarly *and* practical work that will serve both the church and academy.

Just as I am thankful to have worked with Greg, I am also thankful to have worked with Kim Hewitt, Duke University's vice president for institutional equity and chief diversity officer. This thesis literally moves, chapter-by-chapter, from an academic space that defines the church's theology of reconciliation, to a practical space that explores reconciliation through efforts aimed at diversity and inclusion. Indeed, just as much as I benefited from Greg's insight, as an academic and theologian, I also benefited from Kim's insight, as a lawyer and higher education diversity professional. Further, I also benefited from conversations with and editorial suggestions by my lifelong friend, Rory Verrett. Rory's insight and suggestions helped shape my conceptualization of how to bring together theories of diversity and inclusion that range from the apostolic era to modern day, a period of more than two thousand years. I benefited from both the informality of our conversations, as well as the structural and stylistic edits Rory suggested.

As a tribute to much of what I learned from Greg, Kim, and Rory, I am also thankful to the outstanding collective known as Duke Divinity School's 2017 Doctor of Ministry Cohort. In contextualizing reconciliation, I argue *diversity is good*—especially in higher education and the church—two institutions that shape thoughts and perspectives on solving societal problems and addressing social needs, by using the examples of *cognitive diversity*—group diversity based on experience and/or background—and *identity diversity*—group diversity based on race, ethnicity and/or gender. My cohort exemplifies the best of both. Some are clergy and some are laity. We come from different denominational backgrounds and different secular vocations. We are also diverse, based on gender and ethnicity. Consequently, because I have learned with such a diverse group, my horizons have been broadened and leadership capacity increased. For the blessing of sharing a wonderfully rich and rigorous academic experience with such a diverse group of leaders, I am extremely thankful.

Finally, I dedicate this work to my family! I have been blessed by the graciousness of my wife, Michelle, growth and intellectual curiosity of my children, Mason and Jillian, resiliency and faithfulness of my mother, Jeanne, and steadfast support of my sister, Deborah. Without their unconditional and multifaceted encouragement, my matriculation through and graduation from Duke University would not have been possible. It is therefore to my family, with abundant thanks, this work is respectfully dedicated.

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***Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation:
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But a religion true to its nature must also be concerned about man's social conditions. Religion deals with both earth and heaven and, both time and eternity. Religion operates not only on the vertical plane but also on the horizontal. It seeks not only to integrate men with God but to integrate men with men and each man with himself. This means, at bottom, that the Christian gospel is a two-way road. On the one hand, it seeks to change the souls of men, and thereby unite them with God; on the other hand[,] it seeks to change the environmental conditions of men so that the soul will have a chance after it is changed. Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion.¹

I grew up in New Orleans and I love gumbo. Better stated: I love *good* gumbo. In considering what makes gumbo “good,” some might argue the seafood. Others might claim the seasonings. Still others might advocate for the roux. I would respectfully counter that all of the foregoing is at least partially correct. As one of New Orleans’ most popular foods, all gumbo typically contains seafood *and* seasonings and all gumbo begins with a roux. *Good* gumbo, however, is different. Good gumbo is different because it’s diverse. It brings diverse ingredients together, each one enriching the others, making a delicacy that is celebrated around the world.

Just as gumbo is good because of the diversity of its ingredients, I believe the church is better than good when it brings diverse people and groups together in community, as perspectives and experiences are enriched because of differences. Moreover, if diversity is good for the church, I believe it is especially good for society-at-large. Thus, in this interdisciplinary thesis, I emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion, with an egalitarian-like respect for the proverbial Other, by connecting theology, legal history, political science and diversity best practices through a concept popularly known as “reconciliation.”

¹Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001 [1958]), 36.

I Contextualizing Salvific, Social, and Civil Reconciliation

As one of the rare words originating within the church but also enjoying popular secular application, reconciliation can be viewed in both Christocentric and secular ways. From a Christocentric perspective, reconciliation addresses humans being reconciled in their relationship with God, *through Jesus*, as well as being reconciled with one another *because of Jesus*. While the former (*salvific reconciliation*) denotes a soteriological and eschatological redemptive perspective that is focused on the “kingdom-to-come,” the latter (*social reconciliation*) results from a here-and-now perspective that is focused on the “kingdom-at-hand.” The theological focus of this thesis is not so much on salvation or the eschaton. Its focus is instead on an egalitarian ethic—or at least an equal treatment of others—wherein different groups embrace the Other in a mutually beneficial and diverse community. Stated otherwise, social reconciliation makes for good gumbo.

To establish a theological basis for social reconciliation, I begin with a scriptural trajectory chronologically linking the leadership of Peter (Matt. 16; Acts 2 and 10) and theology of Paul, allowing disparate groups to create community through a gumbo-like diversity that is rooted in equitable human relations (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 11:17-22). This theology of equality is not only a core component of the Pauline corpus, but an ethical derivative of it, *civil reconciliation*, is what presumably fueled Reverend Oliver Brown, in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), and the then-unknown Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., in prophetically leading the black church into the secular politics of the Civil Rights Movement. Insofar as social reconciliation embraces a fellowship that is no “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34), civil reconciliation demands governmental and legal redress for social ills. Stated otherwise, gumbo *is not* supposed to be a homogeneous soup. It is, however, supposed to be a richly diverse delicacy and civil reconciliation means the chef must be held accountable.

Consider Reverend Brown. As a minister at St. Mark's African Methodist Episcopal Church in Topeka, Kansas, Brown served in a denomination that was founded because of a desire for equality and acceptance in practice.² Although he preached a liberationist gospel, presumably rooted in Paul's social reconciliation (see, e.g., Gal. 3:26-28), the practice of America's segregated schools was a daily reminder that society embraced a different ethic.

Brown sued the Topeka Board of Education on behalf of his daughter, Linda, when she was denied admission to a local school because she was black. In describing the circumstances leading to litigation, noted legal scholars write, "The lead plaintiff, Oliver Brown, wasangered that his daughter had to travel each day past a modern, fully equipped white school[,] to a black school housed in a deteriorated building . . . [W]hen the case was filed . . . on February 14, 1951, the case bore his name."³ The *Brown* case, along with four others, were consolidated and brought before the United States Supreme Court. On May 17, 1954, the Court sided with the plaintiffs, declaring segregation in public education unconstitutional. Accordingly, one of history's most famous Supreme Court cases came about because a minister was motivated by a desire for equitable treatment for his daughter. In theory, at least, *Brown* would lead to a gumbo-like diversity in America.

Brown also served as an impetus for the Civil Rights Movement that formally began approximately eighteen months later. In following a biblically-based ethic, then-twenty-six-year-

² The AMEC originates from a 1787 breakaway from the then Methodist Episcopal Church (the precursor to the United Methodist Church), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. African American worshipers formed the Free African Society, a precursor to the legal establishment of the AMEC, because they were treated in a discriminatory manner during worship. See Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 173-76; see also AME Sunday School Union, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AME Sunday School Union, 2016), 16.

³ Robert J. Cottrol, Raymond T. Diamond, and Leland B. Ware, *Brown v. Board of Education: Caste, Culture, and the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 128.

old King challenged unjust laws through the Montgomery Bus Boycott, beginning the Civil Rights Movement.⁴ King's work in civil reconciliation would forever change America, just as did the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*.

In connecting the social aspect of Christocentric reconciliation with the secular aspect of civil reconciliation, there is arguably no greater example of how the former influenced the latter than the contextualization of Pauline theology through two of the Civil Rights Movements most empirically successful measures: (1) passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and (2) adoption of government's policy on affirmative action. Both measures sought to foster reconciliation by bringing diverse peoples together for communal benefit, just as Peter did when he baptized Cornelius, the first Gentile member of the church (Acts 10:44-48). To again return to the gumbo analogy, *good* gumbo might contain shrimp *and* crab meat, along with chicken *and* sausage. It's not simply enough to have seafood and meat. Different *types of seafood* and different *types of meat* make for good gumbo, just as different *types of people* and different perspectives *from different people* make for a cohesively functioning church.

II The Divided States of America

Notwithstanding the Civil Rights Movement's success with civil reconciliation, some factions within the United States openly want a country that's more like homogeneous soup and less like good gumbo. This reality became especially evident through the Make America Great Again political narrative that led to Donald Trump's 2016 election. As the political pendulum

⁴ See, generally, Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr and the Word That Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). Although I argue the boycott gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement in 1955, it bears noting that the boycott was not the first of its kind. The Reverend T.J. Jemison, then pastor of Mt. Zion First Baptist Church, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, led a similar boycott in 1953 when blacks boycotted city buses as a means of leveraging economic pressure and demanding an end to Jim Crow segregation in public accommodation. See Adam Faircloth, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 11-12.

swung from Barack Obama to Trump, white nationalist and neo-Nazi forces that were galvanized during Obama's presidency not only led to Trump's election, but were also emboldened to lead anti-minority public spectacles, like the August 2017 massacre in Charlottesville, Virginia.⁵ Further, since Trump's political ascension, there has also been a rise in hate crimes in the United States.⁶ This empirically measured increase underscores the dramatic divisions and factions within the United States.⁷ Regrettably, several of those divisions emanate from the church.

Some of America's ecclesial divisions are denominational. Differences in orthodoxy suggest they are expected. Other divisions are historically social, like those between blacks and whites giving rise to King's great axiom, "11am on Sunday mornings is the most segregated hour in America." As my point of focus, however, there are also theological divisions, like those between conservative evangelicals and more liberal mainline Christians, that have been at the heart of public policy debates exacerbating religious and social divisions in the United States.

⁵ Michael D. Shear and Maggie Haberman, "Trump Again Defends Initial Remarks on Charlottesville; Again, Blames 'Both Sides,'" *The New York Times*, Aug. 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/15/us/politics/trump-press-conference-charlottesville.html>.

⁶ As an example, on the morning of October 27, 2018, only days before the 2018 midterm elections, an anti-Semitic, white nationalist entered the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania and opened fire, killing eleven Jewish worshippers. See Matt Zapposky, Devlin Barnett & Mark Berman, "Suspect in Pittsburg Synagogue Shooting is Charged in 44-count Hate-crime Indictment," *The Washington Post*, Oct. 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/suspect-in-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-charged-in-44-count-hate-crime-indictment/2018/10/31/bf2be61c-dd36-11e8-b3f0-62607289efee_story.html?utm_term=.0ea4949b543c.

⁷ See, e.g., Meg Oliver, "Pittsburg Shooting Highlights Rise in Hate Crimes Across the U.S.," CBS Evening News, Oct. 28, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/pittsburgh-shooting-highlights-rise-hate-crimes-united-states>; Yascha Mounk, "The Nature of Trump's Culpability in the Pittsburg Synagogue Massacre: The Shooter May Despise Him, But the President's Dehumanizing Language Has Made Political Violence—and Hate Crimes Like This—More Likely," *Slate*, Oct. 27, 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/10/pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-trump-rhetoric-antisemitism-civility.html>; see also Media Advisory/Press Release, "NAACP Sees Rise in Hate Crimes, Legacy of Trump's Racism," June 29, 2018, <https://www.naacp.org/latest/naacp-sees-continued-rise-hate-crimes-legacy-trumps-racism>; Joshua Holland, "Yes, Donald Trump is Making White People More Hateful: A New Study Finds Empirical Evidence of the 'Trump Effect.,"" *The Nation*, May 2, 2018, <https://www.thenation.com/article/yes-donald-trump-is-making-white-people-more-hateful>.

The counter-narrative to more conservative dogmatic theologies has been the progressive and emancipatory faith traditions, including those within the black church, that rose to prominence during the Civil Rights Movement. Premised on social reconciliation in the Pauline corpus, the black church led the way in contextualizing civil reconciliation as an egalitarian-based ethos that places great value on diversity in American life and seeks to enforce this ethic through governmental intervention and prophetic resistance.

(A) The Church's Ministry of Reconciliation Must Address Social Divisions

In a time marked by so much social, religious, and communal division, the church's ministry of reconciliation is especially urgent, given societal divisions fueled by xenophobia. Accordingly, I argue the church must return to her apostolic era theology of equality to realize God's intention for her, as evidenced in scripture, by embracing diversity and inclusion principles. Doing so will allow the church to be an exemplar for society-at-large. Further, just as society-at-large can benefit from the church returning to her theology of equality, the church can reciprocally benefit from some secular diversity and inclusion best practices that value heterogeneity.

In drawing from an interdisciplinary analysis rooted in theology, legal history, and diversity and inclusion best practices, my arguments are structurally divided into two main parts and organized into five chapters. I begin with theological foundations and move through both historical and contemporary analyses before connecting the church's apostolic era theology of equality with society at large's diversity best practices.

(B) Structural Organization: Connecting Reconciliation with a Call to Action

Part One: The Church's Theology of Reconciliation

In Part One, *The Church's Theology of Reconciliation*, I establish a foundation for society-at-large to learn from the church's evolving paradigm of reconciliation with the Other. Part One

defines and connects salvific and social reconciliation, before going through a biblical trajectory rooted in a historical examination of the church's origins and evolution that is foundationally anchored in five biblical texts: Matthew 16:13-19; Acts 2 & 10; Galatians 3:26-28, 1 Cor. 11:17-22; and Romans 5-8. Part One explores Peter's leadership and Paul's theology, along with the Civil Rights Movement's contextualized example of King as an exemplar of civil reconciliation.

Chapter 1 establishes a foundation for social reconciliation by looking at the word "church" (*ekklesia*) as originally introduced, when Jesus indicates Peter is the rock upon which he will build the church (a "body" or "assembly") (Matt. 16:13-19). Although social reconciliation's core is Paul's theology, I show how it begins with Peter's leadership, through a chronological progression in scripture. In Matthew 16:13-19, a pericope popularly termed Peter's Confession, Jesus responds to Peter's indication of Jesus's lordship by rewarding Peter's faithfulness in sharing, "Surely flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven . . . You are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my *church* . . ." (Matt. 16:18). Jesus's use of the word "church" is the first time it is used in scripture. In literally meaning an "assembly" or "group," Jesus's reference *is not* to a physical structure, but instead to the assembly of people that will later comprise the "body of Christ." This group was intended to be diverse.

With Peter's leadership designated to have a special place of honor in building the church, the Book of Acts provides an early church history. Luke, its presumed author, tells readers of Peter preaching on the Day of Pentecost when thousands joined the church (Acts 2). Indeed, those who joined and accepted Christ, as the foretold messiah, did not join a building. They joined the *ekklesia*. Although the Pentecost narrative describes diversity of those who initially joined the assembly, its original members were all Jews (Acts 2:5). The original church, therefore, began as

a homogeneous entity that had not yet engaged in reconciliation. Under Peter's leadership, however, that changed!

In Acts 10, before the New Testament progresses to the church's ministry of reconciliation in the Pauline Corpus, we come face-to-face with a biblical version of unconscious bias, a cognitive phenomenon that continually plagues society. When people make and use stereotypes based on ethnicity, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, and unknowingly treat people unlike them as the Other, they engage in unconscious bias. Indeed, they have the same reaction as did the Jewish Peter, after dreaming of divisions between Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:9-16). It was not until after Peter rejected his bias and embraced the Gentile Cornelius as his equal that the church started moving toward reconciliation. This egalitarian ethic later becomes the ethos of Paul's theology. Accordingly, before exploring the social dimensions of Paul's theology in chapter 2, the foundation laid in chapter 1 details Peter's leadership in facilitating reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, given the divine revelation that Jesus came for *all* people, as equals.

Chapter 2 builds on the opening chapter's foundational exploration of Peter's leadership by looking at Paul's theology. By exploring *social reconciliation* in select portions of the Pauline corpus, Chapter 2 overviews Paul's "theology of equality," most popularly manifested in Galatians 3:23-28, 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, and Romans 5-8. I argue this type of reconciliation with the proverbial Other, rooted in a Pauline theology of equitable relations within the church, is at the heart of Paul's authentic writings.

In Chapter 3, the closing chapter of Part One, I move from biblical examples of social reconciliation into a contextualization of Paul's theology of equality in *civil reconciliation*. By using King's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement as an exemplar, I show how Paul's theology is lived-out in practical application. Civil reconciliation essentially applies Paul's theology of

equality in the form of demands for governmental redress to ensure equitable treatment is not just moral, but also legal.

Further, chapter 3 also focuses on forgiveness, a key element of reconciliation, insofar as true reconciliation requires that dominant and subjugated groups wipe the slate clean. In doing so, we show how the church's work toward civil reconciliation must continue. Indeed, this is this ministry that Jesus left to the church (2 Cor. 5:17).⁸ As body moving toward reconciliation, the church should continue its witness of transformation by working for more just and equitable political and socioeconomic systems in society-at-large.

Part Two: Reconciliation with the Other

Part Two, *Reconciliation with the Other*, builds upon Part One's foundation. In chapter 4, I show the reaction to progress made by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the government's adoption of affirmative action, two of the Civil Rights Movement's most quantifiable measures of success, at least in terms of diversity and inclusion. In the late 1960s, Richard Nixon's presidential campaign engaged in a "southern strategy" that sought to align more conservative voters with evangelical Christians in rejecting the racial progress associated with civil reconciliation. This conservative alliance of evangelicals and the Religious Right proved to be a Republican Party bedrock constituency, especially after Ronald Regan famously courted evangelicals in his successful 1980 presidential campaign.

Chapter 4 highlights that, while finding an almost unified opposition to *Roe v. Wade*, this same conservative alliance led to Trump's 2016 election, as evangelicals embraced the Make America Great Again narrative, the antithesis of reconciliation. Now, however, the extremity of

⁸ L. Gregory Jones and Celestin Musekura, *Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 38 (addressing reconciliation as a ministry that Jesus left to the church).

Trump's politics and policies have created a public break among evangelicals that has not existed for at least forty years. In moving the church toward reconciliation, the question must therefore become whether these factions present an opportunity for more progressive evangelicals to find common ground with mainline Christians, at least on certain issues.

Chapter 5 concludes Part Two by asking the same proverbial question King raised after his work in the Civil Rights Movement, "Where Do We Go From Here?" By exploring a scriptural progression that moves from migration in Genesis to diversity in Revelation's church triumphant, I make the argument that God intended for the *ekklesia* to be diverse. Accordingly, chapter 5 connects diversity and inclusion best practices to show the benefits of diversity, while seeking to develop a common space, largely driven by social issues, where evangelicals and mainline Christians can move toward reconciliation to improve society. Insofar as Trump's divisive narrative is a call to "Make America Great Again," by seeking to return the church to her apostolic era embrace of the Other, chapter 5 challenges us to "Make the Church Great Again!"

III Conclusion

As the opening epigraph suggests, I place an emphasis on faith compelling social action and motivating the church to improve society-at-large. By arguing it's time to "Make the Church Great Again," I am implicitly suggesting that the United States is too fractured—partially because of divisions emanating from the church—for members of the church to be "resident aliens."⁹ The church must continue the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to her. In this day-and-age, the work of reconciliation will necessitate an element of prophetic public engagement, to create common ground. Indeed, this was the ministry of Christ himself.

⁹ See, generally, Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989) (playing upon a popular passage from Philippians to argue that because members of the church can neither conform themselves to or change society, they are "resident aliens" living temporarily in another land).

Chapter 1: The Trajectory of Reconciliation

Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him . . .’¹

The term reconciliation popularly entered the English lexicon after its original and rare use in the biblical canon.² In a secular sense, the term might mean “mediation between two parties that come together in peace and give up their enmity, anger and hatred.”³ In a theological context, however, reconciliation denotes humanity being restored in her relationship with God.⁴ Since the late twentieth century, peacemaking practices centered on reconciliation have offered ways to curtail the effects of violence and war in society.⁵ Indeed, because of the popularity of entities like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission,⁶ as well as various denominational “ministries of reconciliation,” the term is frequently used in both political and ecclesial circles.⁷

¹ Acts 10:34 (NRSV) (hereinafter, unless specifically stated, any and all scriptural citations are from the New revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible).

² Colin E. Gunton, “Introduction,” in *The Theology of Reconciliation*, ed. Colin E. Gunton (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 1.

³ Svetlana Khobnya, “Reconciliation Must Prevail: A Fresh Look at 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2,” *European Journal of Theology* 25, no. 2 (2016): 128-36 (129) (internal citations omitted).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Laurie Brink, “From Wrongdoer to New Creation: Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians,” *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 71, no. 3 (2017): 298-309 (299).

⁶ See, e.g., Mary Ingouville Burton, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 2016); Allan Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2012); Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1999); see also Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1997).

⁷ In the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, The House of Bishops of the Episcopal Church gathered in Burlington, Vermont with a preset thematic focus on globalization. In light of the terrorist attacks, however, and to address racism and xenophobia along with poverty and Western colonialization, the House of Bishops issued a clarion call, “On Waging Reconciliation.” Their call, along with the papers presented to them in Burlington, were assembled as part of the Episcopal Church’s work toward reconciliation. See, generally, Ian T. Douglas, ed., *Waging Reconciliation: God’s Mission in a Time of Globalization and Crisis* (New York: Church Pub., Inc., 2002). Furthermore, the Episcopal Church also has an active Ministry of Racial Reconciliation. See <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/racial-reconciliation>.

Although the theological underpinnings of reconciliation are arguably the most core component of the New Testament, the Greek verb and noun meaning “to reconcile” and “reconciliation,” appear only twelve times in the Bible, almost exclusively in the Pauline corpus.⁸ Moreover, in distinguishing between writings that are believed to be authentically Paul’s and deuterio-Pauline, the term only appears in Paul’s authentic letters in the Corinthian correspondence and Romans (1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18-19; and Rom. 5:10-11).⁹ Matthew and Acts are the only other two instances where a form of the word is used in scripture.¹⁰

Further, of the six times the verb *katalasso* is used in the Pauline corpus, five references are to the relationship between God and humanity and one reference (1 Cor. 7:11) is to a relationship between spouses.¹¹ Consequently, more traditional exegetical scholarship focuses on

⁸ According to John Fitzgerald, the Greek word translated “to reconcile,” *katallasso*, is found six times (Rom. 5:10 x 2 & 11; 1 Cor. 7:11; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19) and the noun, *katallasso* (reconciliation) four times (Rom. 5:11; 11:15; 2 Cor. 5:18; 19). Further, the related verb *apokatallasso* is used in the Deutero-Pauline letters (Eph. 2:16; Col. 1:20, 22). John T. Fitzgerald, “Paul and Paradigm Shifts: Reconciliation and Its Linkage Group,” in *Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide*, ed. Troels Engberg-Pederson (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2001), 241-42; see also Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul’s Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 25; Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul’s Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1989), 72-73; 80.

⁹ Scholars have long regarded the Pauline corpus as being comprised of both authentic and disputed or deuterio-Pauline epistles. 1 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, Romans and Philemon are considered authentic and to have been written by Paul. Conversely, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, Hebrews, and the letters to Titus and Timothy are part of the Pauline corpus but not considered authentic. See, e.g., Bruce J. Malina and John J. Pilch, *Social Science Commentary on the Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 1. Accordingly, with respect to Paul’s use of forms of the word reconciliation, only the Corinthian correspondence and Romans are considered to be authentic. See Delbert Royce Burkett, *An Introduction to the New Testament and the Origins of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 292-93.

¹⁰ The related usage, *apokatallasso*, in Matt. 5:24, is “become reconciled,” referring to reconciliation with one’s brother before an altar offering is made, and in Acts 7:26, *synallasso*, “reconcile” refers to solving a dispute between two brothers. Fitzgerald, “Paul and Paradigm Shifts”, 241-42. As Martin notes, “Aside from Matthew 5:24, the motif of reconciliation is limited to the Pauline writings” Martin, *Reconciliation*, 73.

¹¹ Gunton, “Introduction,” 15. Since Romans is believed to have been Paul’s last epistle, see Leander E. Keck, “The Letter of Paul to the Romans,” in *The Harper Collins Study Bible: Including Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books with Concordance* (NRSV), ed. Harold W. Attridge (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2006), 1910, and his use of reconciliation in 1 Cor. 7:11 is limited to a spousal relationship, special attention will be given herein to 2 Cor. 5:17-20 as Paul’s earliest and arguably clearest teaching on the subject. Seyoon Kim, “2 Cor. 5:11-21 and the Origin of Paul’s Concept of ‘Reconciliation,’” *Novum Testamentum* 39, no. 4 (1997): 362.

Paul's use of the term reconciliation as referring to the relationship between God and humanity.¹² Although I begin with the relationship between God and humans, I also move toward a more interpersonal ethic. "Christian reconciliation roots itself in the saving act of God who reconciles humanity through the blood of the cross, but 'the concept of reconciliation has assumed a far more central place in Christian theology than might have been expected from its limited use in the New Testament.'" ¹³

Insofar as the word reconciliation might mean different things in different contexts, I use the term to specifically denote three types of reconciliation, while qualifying my usage in three different ways. The first two types of usage are Christocentric and are derived from Trinitarian theology.¹⁴ The third type of usage, however, although stemming from the Pauline corpus, is secular in scope. It emphasizes an ethical value placed on the diversity of human worth as being deeply rooted in egalitarianism. I argue this social and egalitarian ethic that Paul addresses in Galatians 3:26-28 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, for example, is the basis for the continued popular usage of reconciliation in both political and ecclesial contexts. Accordingly, I begin by defining the three types of reconciliation I discuss, establishing their parameters of focus and detailing what I call a biblical "trajectory of reconciliation," beginning with Peter's leadership and progressing into Paul's theology.

¹² Constantineanu, *Social Significance of Reconciliation*, xv (citing Rom. 5:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Col. 1:20-21; and Eph. 2:11-22).

¹³ Brink, "From Wrongdoer to New Creation," 299 (citing I. Howard Marshall, "The Meaning of Reconciliation," in *Unity and Diversity in New Testament Theology: Essays in Honor of George E. Ladd*, ed. Robert A. Guelich [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978]: 130).

¹⁴ Gunton, "Introduction," 2.

I Defining and Contextualizing Three Types of Reconciliation: Salvific, Social and Civil

The three forms of reconciliation I address are different, but simultaneously interrelated. I will show how my trajectory of reconciliation theology begins in a biblical chronology rooted in the leadership of Peter and theology of Paul. I will also detail how egalitarianism manifested in ecclesial and theological applications that led to governmental and regulatory attempts to foster diversity, a modern form of reconciliation, through institutions like affirmative action and legislation like the Voting Rights Act of 1965. My trajectory of reconciliation will then move from the 1950s and 60s application of reconciliation to an ethically-based valuation that places a premium on human diversity in non-ecclesial settings. First, however, it is imperative that I contextualize my three uses of the term.

(A) Salvific Reconciliation

With the image of the Christian cross as a symbolic guide, my first usage is *salvific reconciliation*. “Paul describes reconciliation through the lens of those redeemed. ‘If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold the new has come.’”¹⁵ Accordingly, this first type of reconciliation stems from the imagery of the Christian cross’ vertical plane, representing humanity being reconciled in its relationship with God.

Paul writes in Romans, “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation” (Rom. 5:10-11). In expounding on Paul’s usage and illustrating salvific reconciliation, Malina and Pilch write:

¹⁵ Brink, “From Wrongdoer to New Creation,” 299 (citing 2 Cor. 5:17).

By shaming God we became enemies of God. Thanks to the death of Jesus, ‘his Son,’ God reconciled us to himself; we ceased to be enemies, and friendly relations have been restored. If this is the result of Jesus’ death, all the more so we be rescued from ‘wrath’ through Jesus’ resurrection.¹⁶

Stated otherwise, with God as the constant and humanity as the deviant, Jesus reconciled humanity in her relationship with God.

Salvific reconciliation is the consequence of Jesus’s unmerited suffering and is a theological reference to atonement.¹⁷ This reference “is rooted in God the Father’s faithfulness to . . . the human creation which he permitted to become his enemies. It is accordingly given its form by the Son, a form in which it is both God’s work and fully involves humanity in the event.”¹⁸ Stated otherwise, with soteriological and eschatological undertones, salvific reconciliation contemplates humankind’s reconciliation with God *through* Jesus.¹⁹

Some might embrace this as part of a penal substitution theory.²⁰ Rather than seeing Jesus through such a theology, however, salvific reconciliation more so sees Jesus’s suffering under a liberationist theory. Stated otherwise, Jesus is humankind’s liberator *and* reconciler, restoring humanity to her relationship with God by liberating her from sin.²¹ This is the essence of salvific reconciliation.

¹⁶ Malina and Pilch, *Social Science Commentary*, 247.

¹⁷ See Veli-Matti Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation: A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 298-307 (providing an overview of various Christian theologies of atonement).

¹⁸ Gunton, “Introduction,” 2-3.

¹⁹ Barth brings together soteriology, anthropology, and ecclesiology in his “The Doctrine of Reconciliation,” at the heart of *Church Dogmatics*. See, generally, Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956).

²⁰ Most popularly attributed to John Calvin, the penal substitution theory is concerned with punishment for violation of the law. Under it, Christ’s death is a substitute for human sin and Christ’s suffering is substituted for human transgressions. Tyron Inbody, *The Faith of the Christian Church: An Introduction to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 222-23.

²¹ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 3d ed. (New York: Morehouse, 2002), 191-93 (explaining liberationist theologies wherein Jesus is viewed as a liberator with a scriptural basis in Luke 4:16-19).

(B) Social Reconciliation

My second usage, *social reconciliation*, is based on salvific reconciliation but moves toward a political ethic rooted in an egalitarianism, or at least equal treatment of others, found in the Pauline corpus. Victor Furnish argues that reconciliation is a binding thought in Paul's correspondence, both from theological and anthropological perspectives.²² Moreover, in acknowledging its theological *and* social importance, Khobnya writes:

Paul clearly has in mind the idea of sustaining God's established order in Christ when he explains the concept of reconciliation, further stating that the ministry of reconciliation is entrusted to us (2 Cor. 5:19) God's act of reconciliation in Christ has significant implications for the identity of Christ's followers. They are appointed ambassadors of reconciliation.²³

Indeed, in *Paul and the Person*,²⁴ Susan Eastman explores Paul's use of interdisciplinary perspectives that show "Paul's anthropology . . . is grounded in Christology" and take "seriously his conviction that the God revealed in Jesus Christ is both transcendent 'other' and intimately involved in human history," while engaging "with contemporary as well as ancient depictions of what is intrinsic to being a person."²⁵

1. Social Reconciliation Requires Equal Treatment of Others

Directly flowing from salvific reconciliation, social reconciliation rhetorically asks, "Now that the human soul is saved, so what? How do humans relate to each other?" Khobnya places a compelling onus on humans to be more "Christ-like" in their social treatment of one another because of the way God treated humanity in reconciling humanity to God.

²² See the summary by Victor Paul Furnish, "The Ministry of Reconciliation," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4 (1977): 204-18.

²³ Khobnya, "Reconciliation Must Prevail," 131.

²⁴ Susan Grove Eastman, *Paul and the Person: Reframing Paul's Anthropology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ but the task of reconciliation must still be carried out. God makes his appeal through us ([2. Cor.] 5:20). As ambassadors for Christ, Paul sees himself and his brothers and sisters as ministers of reconciliation proclaiming to the world ‘announcing the effect of the Christ event, and striving to get more and more of mankind [sic] to appropriate to itself the benefits thereof.’²⁶

In other words, if there is no social ethic attached, there is the danger of a “superficial discipleship that separates salvation from social transformation.”²⁷ I will attempt to show, by focusing on 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, Galatians 3:26-28 and 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, that Paul addresses social issues in uniting Jews and Gentiles—people of different origins, identities, and backgrounds—to transcend the boundaries of their differences and live together in community, under an egalitarian social ethic.²⁸

Whereas salvific reconciliation relates to humanity being reconciled to God *through* Jesus, social reconciliation contemplates humans being reconciled to one another *because of* Jesus. In his correspondence to the church at Galatia, for example, while rejecting arguments that Gentile converts to Christianity must first undergo the Jewish custom of circumcision before becoming Christian, Paul emphasizes the uniform nature of salvation through Jesus and how human beings are equal to one another because of Jesus. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Moreover, in elaborating on this social dynamic of equality in interpersonal relationships *because of* Jesus, Karkkainen writes:

The remarkable statement in Galatians 3:28 of the racial (Jews and Gentiles), societal (free and slave), and sexual (female and male) ‘one[ness] in Christ’ is but the culmination of the great narrative of atonement and reconciliation that begins

²⁶ Khobnya, “Reconciliation Must Prevail,” 133 (internal citations omitted).

²⁷ Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 28.

²⁸ Constantineanu, *Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 3.

from the crucified Christ and the reception of the Spirit . . . and moves to the promise . . . to unite Jews and Gentiles²⁹

This ethic is arguably the best example of the requisite equal treatment of others for social reconciliation.

2. Social Reconciliation Requires Forgiveness for Previous Transgressions

In considering the history of dominant groups' subjugation of non-dominant groups, true social reconciliation can only come about with an element of forgiveness. Just as God forgave humanity *through Jesus*, humans must likewise forgive one another *because of Jesus*. In illustrating this point, while implicitly referencing Dietrich Bonhoeffer,³⁰ Deotis Roberts writes:

Forgiveness and reconciliation come to sinful humanity through the incarnation, which includes the cross and the resurrection. Grace is 'costly' and is manifest only when there is an 'I-thou' encounter between us and God. Knowing the measure of God's love expressed in God's redemptive act in Christ should humble the Christian and enable one to love and forgive.³¹

Stated otherwise, social reconciliation requires human beings to forgive one another, just as God forgives human beings.

Further, in giving context to the dominant and non-dominant group dynamic, while emphasizing the importance of forgiveness in moving toward reconciliation, Desmond Tutu describes Nelson Mandela's transition, from incarcerated prisoner under apartheid in 1990, to elected president under democracy in 1994, noting how Mandela forgave his oppressors:

What a metamorphosis, what an extraordinary turnaround. He invited his white jailer to attend his inauguration as an honored guest, the first of many gestures he would make in his spectacular way, showing his breathtaking magnanimity and willingness to forgive. He would be a potent agent for the reconciliation he would urge his compatriots to work for and which would form part of the Truth and

²⁹ Karkkainen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, 367.

³⁰ See, generally, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995 [1959]).

³¹ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 62-63.

Reconciliation Commission he was going to appoint to deal with our country's past. This man, who had been . . . incarcerated for nearly three decades, would soon be transformed into the embodiment of forgiveness and reconciliation.³²

Indeed, from a theological perspective, forgiveness is a crucial aspect of social reconciliation.³³

In addressing aspects of reconciling forgiveness, while specifically detailing issues of power, Greg Jones writes, “the practice of reconciling forgiveness calls us to unlearn the language that confuses, dominates, and controls and learn the ‘redemptive language’ that enables us to sustain community. Issues of forgiveness and reconciliation invariably involve issues of power”³⁴ In contextualizing the necessity of forgiveness, especially with respect to an imbalance of power, Bishop Tutu addresses the egregious genocide and other atrocities revealed during the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in such a way that he alludes to Genesis 6:5 and the fact that God might have been sorry for God's creation of humanity.³⁵ In a sudden shift, however, while emphasizing forgiveness, he also writes,

Gloriously, there was another side that would be revealed as well. It was the side who showed people who by rights should have been filled with bitterness because of the untold and unnecessary suffering they had endured. Instead they were to demonstrate a remarkable generosity of spirit, an almost unprecedented magnanimity in their willingness to forgive those who tormented them so.³⁶

Forgiveness is therefore a crucial part of social reconciliation.

³² Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 10.

³³ In defining reconciliation and highlighting the importance of forgiveness, Brenda McNeil writes, “Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish.” Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 22.

³⁴ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 190.

³⁵ Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* 124.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

3. Forgiveness, as Part of Social Reconciliation, is a Ministry Jesus Left to the Church

As a biblical basis for forgiving the acts of others, in writing to the church at Corinth, Paul calls on members of the body of Christ not to count trespasses against one another, but to be reconciled with one another, as God reconciled humanity to himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-19). In expounding upon Paul's reference, and addressing the importance of forgiveness in reconciliation, Jones also writes, "If we take scripture seriously, Christians have to acknowledge that we are not only a forgiven people called to forgive one another; we have also been entrusted with the message of God's forgiveness and reconciliation for the whole world."³⁷ Indeed, with respect to forgiveness being a part of what I term social reconciliation and noting that it is a ministry Jesus left to us, "We are ambassadors for Christ."³⁸

In exemplifying the horizontal axis of the Christian cross, this socially-rooted egalitarianism is the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to the church. Ralph Martin describes this divine legacy by arguing:

Reconciliation is more than a theological code-word for God's work in restoring men and women to himself. It marks the way of life to which those people are summoned by the fact that they are reconciled and share in God's continuing ministry of reconciliation in the world. The life of the Pauline congregations was for the apostle one of the most telling methods of evangelism since that corporate life was meant to reflect both the character of God and the outworking of the message as it applied to the human context. As Christians loved one another, forgave and were compassionate to one another, and showed forth in their mutual attitudes that they shared a new spirit which was not self-centered, hard-hearted or spiteful but one that made for unity and harmony, so they were giving expression to the authenticity of the message of reconciliation.³⁹

³⁷ L. Gregory Jones and Celestin Musekura, *Forgiving as We've Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2010), 38; see also Khobnya, "Reconciliation Must Prevail," 131.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Martin, *Reconciliation*, 230.

As I will show, the ministry of social reconciliation is made manifest through a trajectory of select biblical pericopes, emphasizing Peter's leadership and Paul's theology.

(C) Civil Reconciliation

Civil reconciliation—unlike salvific reconciliation and social reconciliation—is not necessarily Christocentric. Instead, it is rooted in a moral ethic that seeks, among other things, governmental redress to remedy perceived injustices. I argue the application of a Pauline-inspired social reconciliation was contextualized as *civil reconciliation*, in the resistance, civil disobedience, and dissident fights for human equality that defined Martin Luther King, Jr.'s ministry during the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁰

Civil reconciliation is exemplified by the way both social reconciliation and moral law influenced King's ministry. For example, in responding to fellow clergy members' criticisms of his secular engagement and resistance to human laws, King—while incarcerated over Easter weekend in 1963—wrote from Birmingham, Alabama:

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in public schools, it is rather paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, 'How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?' The answer is found

⁴⁰ In relying on civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance, King details his socio-theological thought evolution, originally influenced by Henry David Thoreau's *Essay on Civil Disobedience*, before his formal study of works by Rauschenbusch, Niebuhr, and Nietzsche, along with his comprehensive study of Gandhi. See Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001 [1958]), 91-107. While there are arguably countless works detailing King's ecclesial leadership, theological beliefs, and practical work, I contextualize civil reconciliation, with King as an exemplar, by deliberately basing my argument on the following: Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter From Birmingham Jail and the Struggle that Changed a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013); Clayborne Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Grand Central, 1998); Peter J. Paris, *Black Religious Leaders: Conflict in Unity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1986); James M. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: HarperCollins, 1986); David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Acts of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are *just* and there are *unjust* laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that ‘An unjust law is no law at all.’⁴¹

Although not directly related to the church, civil reconciliation stems from a biblically-based theological ethic that is rooted in an equal treatment of others. Proverbially speaking, therefore, civil reconciliation is where the theological rubber meets the practical road.

Civil reconciliation also takes Pauline theology, as exemplified in Galatians 3:26-28, and applies its intrinsic ethical value of “diversity in oneness” to political measures such as affirmative action and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, in order to support diversity and inclusion practices in society-at-large. Indeed, “Promoting diversity just makes good business sense. Reconciliation becomes synonymous with celebrating differences or with making institutions and societies more ‘inclusive’ of diverse people groups.”⁴² As Associate Justice Lewis Powell wrote for the Supreme Court, in the seminal decision upholding diversity considerations in higher education, “it is not too much to say that the ‘nation’s future depends upon leaders trained through wide exposure’ to the ideas and mores of students as diverse as this Nation of many peoples.”⁴³ In therefore following the Supreme Court’s logic, my analysis of civil reconciliation presents an opportunity for the church’s theology to offer a benefit to the secular world and for the secular world to offer its diversity experiences as a benefit to the church.

In exploring these three types of reconciliation, I am much less concerned with soteriological and eschatological aspects of reconciliation and much more concerned with a

⁴¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 293 (emphasis in original).

⁴² Katongole and Rice, *Reconciling All Things*, 29.

⁴³ *Regents of University of California v. Bakke*, 438 U.S. 256, 313 (1978). In keeping with the Supreme Court’s logic, diversity consultant Howard Ross also writes, “Educational institutions know that a diverse student body creates a better scholastic experience for their learners and that the quality of teaching improves when teachers demonstrate more inclusivity and less bias.” Howard J. Ross, *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives* (Lanham: Roman & Littlefield, 2014), xii-xiii.

communal acceptance of “the Other” that eliminates xenophobia. Accordingly, in limiting matters to a practical implementation of what might be considered “applied theology,” salvific reconciliation is only referenced in cursory fashion. As Part One of this thesis proceeds, my primary focus is social reconciliation, whereas in Part Two, my primary focus is civil reconciliation.

II The Trajectory of Reconciliation Theology in the Biblical Canon

Before exploring Paul’s egalitarian theology (along with his background as a Pharisaic Jew) that informs my view of social reconciliation, it is necessary to first consider the biblical chronology and Hebrew influence on the New Testament in moving the church toward reconciliation. Accordingly, I begin with Peter’s leadership in Matthew, the most-historically rich and Hebrew-influenced of the four canonical gospels, originating a trajectory of reconciliation rooted in Peter’s famous confession of Jesus as the foretold messiah.

(A) Peter’s Leadership in Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation

1. The Original Use of the Word “Church”

The word church (*ekklesia*) is originally used in the biblical canon in Matthew 16 as a starting point for social reconciliation.⁴⁴ The word’s usage, as a baseline for my conceptualization, manifests through Jesus’s implications in conversing with Peter. With an implication rooted in diversity, Matthew details how Jesus, an itinerant *Jewish* preacher, originally used the term “church” while conversing with Peter, his *Jewish* disciple, as they entered Caesarea Philippi, a predominately *Gentile* area (Matt. 16:1). In one of the Bible’s most popular quotes, Jesus approves of Peter’s faithfulness and confession that Jesus is the foretold

⁴⁴ The term church (*ekklesia*) is only used twice in the four gospels, both times in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). While it may refer to Israel as God’s covenant people, its association with an assembly can be traced to people gathering together to receive God’s law from Moses (Deut. 9:10). See Warren Carter, “Matthew,” in *The New Interpreter’s Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1776.

Jewish messiah by exclaiming, “Surely flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my *church* . . .” (Matt. 16:18).

With that original use of the word “church,” as an assembly or group of people, Jesus’s syntax supports the conclusion that his intention has nothing to do with building another Jewish synagogue or temple. Instead, Jesus’s reference is to Peter’s faith. Moreover, this reference comes just before Jesus calls Peter “the rock” (*petros*) upon which the *ekklesia* would be built.⁴⁵ The context of Jesus using the word *church*, therefore, implies Jesus intended for the church to be an ethnically, socioeconomically, and politically diverse group of people.

2. The Keys Are Symbols of Both History and Hope

During a visit to the Vatican, while standing before St. Peter’s Square, I remember the main entrance’s larger-than-life marble statues of Saints Peter and Paul to the left and right, respectively. Also, directly atop the entrance is a detailed carving of Peter, kneeling in a posture of submission, while surrounded by Jesus’s other disciples. As Jesus stands above Peter, Jesus gives Peter *two* golden keys. The scriptural reference is unmistakably clear, especially considering the many papal seals around the Vatican and on so many public fountains in Rome, where two keys are so prominently featured. One might ask, however, “Why *two* keys?” The pericope clearly describes a plural; but, why not three?

I believe the sculptors used *two* keys on the papal seals, just as with the Baroque carving above the Vatican’s main entrance, because of Matthew’s unique nature and this pericope’s transitional importance. The two keys symbolize two things: (1) Israel’s history; and (2) Israel’s

⁴⁵ In underscoring Matthew’s connectedness to Israel’s history, regarding Jesus’s reference to Peter, Donald Senior writes, “The portrayal of Peter as the foundation ‘rock’ on which the community is built evokes the image of Abraham and Sarah as foundation stones of the community of Israel” Donald Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 19980, 191(citing Isa. 51:1-2).

future. In expressly and implicitly referencing Old Testament scriptures, the first symbolic key Jesus gives Peter represents Israel's history, a common theme predominating Matthew.⁴⁶

Second, because of Peter's evidenced faith, the second key symbolizes Israel's future and the responsibility Jesus bestows upon Peter in building the *ekklesia*. In underscoring an Old Testament connection, the symbolic keys of access to the church are reminiscent of the key of the house of David (Isaiah 22:22), the same genealogical lineage from which Jesus descends (Matt. 1:6). As Matthew uniquely details Jesus giving Peter a key of legacy, representing Israel's history as God's chosen people, the narrative also details Jesus giving Peter a key of responsibility, representing Israel's future. Indeed, as scripturally demonstrated throughout this chapter's trajectory of reconciliation argument, the church's future includes it becoming a reconciling assembly, embracing both Jews and Gentiles.

3. A Textual Analysis of Peter's Confession

Matthew 16's setting in Caesarea Philippi, a place more associated with Gentiles than Jews, serves as a major turning point in the Matthean narrative. It broadens the church's future invitation to Gentiles, as well as Jews, while simultaneously connecting Jesus with the prophecies of Israel's past.⁴⁷ It also includes elements unique to Matthew, underscoring its

⁴⁶ Of the four canonical gospels, and particularly the three synoptic gospels, Matthew can be termed the "Jewish Gospel," arguably because of its uniqueness in focusing on Israel's history. In addressing this point, Senior argues:

Matthew's community still lived out of a thoroughly Jewish perspective, considering the 'Old Testament' their primary Scriptures, faithfully adhering to the demands of the Jewish law concerning diet, Sabbath, and other regulations. These Jewish Christians saw their faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God not as a rejection of their Jewish heritage but as a God-intended fulfilment of it To 'fulfill'—a key concept in Matthew—did not mean that the community's Jewish heritage was superfluous, but that Jesus brought to full expression all of the promise God had given to Israel in the course of its history . . . none of the Gospels are more thoroughly Jewish in perspective than Matthew.

Ibid., 22.

⁴⁷ Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Original African Heritage Study Bible* (KJV) (Nashville: The James C. Winston Publishing Co., 1993), 1407.

perspective as the “Jewish Gospel,” by linking Israel’s history together with her future.⁴⁸ Accordingly, Peter’s confession is a bridge between Old Testament prophetic predications, linking them to Jesus, in fulfillment of the messianic scriptures (see, e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12-13, 16). Arguably, therefore, Matthew’s bridge-like nature—connecting the messianic scriptures to Jesus as the foretold messiah—is the reason for its place of primacy in the New Testament.

From its northern setting in Galilee, there is a physical transition as Jesus begins moving south toward Jerusalem (16:21). There is also a theological transition, as Matthew’s version of Peter’s confession identifies Jesus as both the messiah *and* son of the living God (16:16). Earlier in Matthew, after seeing Jesus walk on water, the disciples had already confessed Jesus’s Lordship as “the Son of God” (14:33). Indeed, Matthew has broached the question of Jesus’s identity numerous times before (“What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?” (8:27); “Are you the one who is to come or shall we wait for another?” (11:3); and “All the crowds were amazed and said, ‘Can this be the Son of David?’” (12:23)). As a point of emphasis, therefore, Matthew 16’s focus is less on Peter’s confession of Jesus as the messiah and more on the exchange between Jesus and Peter, along with Jesus’s charge to build the church (16:19).

3.1 The Key of Legacy Representing Israel’s History

In response to Jesus’s question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (16:13), the disciples cite Jeremiah, along with John the Baptist or Elijah (16:14). Matthew’s inclusion of Jeremiah arguably emphasizes the parallels its writer draws between Jesus and Jeremiah, a prominent prophet in Israel’s history (2:17; 27:9). Moreover, in addition citing Jeremiah in Peter’s confession, Matthew portrays Peter identifying Jesus as “son of *the living* God.” (16:16;

⁴⁸ Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 88.

cf. Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). This again arguably connects Matthew with the Old Testament (*see* Psalm 42:2), by a title with strong messianic overtones. Further, with respect to Israel's history, Jesus lauds Peter and identifies him as "Son of Jonah." (16:17). Jesus either uses "Jonah," as a variant of John (John 1:42), or Matthew again makes an Old Testament connection between Peter's prophetic gifts and those of Jonah.

3.2 The Key of Responsibility Representing Israel's Future

The pericope then shifts, looking ahead toward Israel's hopes, with much less emphasis on her history. Its focus, on the anticipated building of the church, manifests itself through Jesus's promise to Peter. Jesus identifies Peter as "the rock" and promises that upon that rock he will build the church (16:18), a designation subsequently used in Matthew's narrative to specifically reference the assembly of believers (18:17). Moreover, before Jesus references the keys—the symbols of authority—he declares the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church (16:18). While the New Revised Standard Version uses the term "Hades," the name of the Greek god of the underworld, the King James Version uses the term "hell." With either version, the reference is clear: Jesus's church—an inclusive community and alternative to Rome's imperial order—shall always prevail against her enemies.

Jesus's gift to Peter reveals the path for Israel's future, as an inclusive community of both Jews *and* Gentiles, where authority for admission is predicated on the keys (16:19).

. . . Jesus gives Peter 'the keys of the kingdom of heaven,' an image drawn from the story of Isa 22:15-25 where Shenbah, the unfaithful 'master of the household,' is replaced by Eliakim. Eliakim is given the 'key of the house of David' and has the power to open and shut the gates. Peter is invested as the master of the household of Jesus and given the power to 'bind and loose' (16:19); his decision will be ratified by heavenly authority. The terms 'binding and loosing' are used in rabbinic literature to cover several functions, including the authority to determine membership, to impose rules and sanctions, and even for the power of exorcism.

The same power is given to the community itself in 18:18 where the issue at stake is clearly the authority to determine membership⁴⁹

Insofar as the keys denote authority, I believe Jesus's reference of "binding" and "loosing" denotes a practical interpretation of Jesus's teachings and how members of the community forgive one another as members of the church (18:15-18; *see also* John 20:23).⁵⁰ This is indeed an aspect of social reconciliation.

4. The Church was Born as a *Jewish* Assembly

In following the Bible's canonical sequence, the symbolism of Jesus entrusting Peter with Israel's past and future—symbolically determining who will receive admission to the church—"the assembly" comes to fruition on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preaches and a wide diversity of people are admitted to the church (Acts 2). In describing the significance of Peter's

⁴⁹ Senior, *Matthew*, 191-92. Furthermore, on the note of membership in the church and in laying a foundation to move on a trajectory of reconciliation in the biblical cannon, I believe it is parenthetically important to juxtapose Paul's implications on Jews and Jewish Christians, as they relate to membership in the church. In writing to the Galatians, Paul addresses a dispute between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians over whether Gentile Christians must first conform to the Mosaic covenant, including circumcision, before accepting Christ. After emphatically rejecting such arguments, in the letter's benediction, Paul writes, "For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." (Gal. 6:15-16). Susan Eastman does an excellent job in arguing that as a Jew, with his benediction, Paul does not forget his fellow Jews who *will not* become members of the church. Instead, through exegetical commentary, she argues that, "Israel continues to exist in the present tense, distinct from the church, as the object of God's providence, judgment, and mercy. As such, in Gal. 6:16 Israel is a sign of God's commitment to history, to flesh and blood people, beyond as well as within the confines of the church." Susan Grove Eastman, "Israel and the Mercy of God: A Re-reading of Galatians 6:16 and Romans 9-11," in *New Testament Studies* 56 (2010): 367-95, 95.

⁵⁰ In addressing forgiveness in the Matthean context, as well as with reference to John 20:22-23, Greg Jones also writes of "binding and loosing" as follows:

These terms are derived from rabbinic usage (in turn based on Leviticus 19:17), and they have two interrelated meanings. In relation to moral discernment, to 'bind' is to enjoin, to forbid, or to make obligatory; to 'loose' is to leave free, to permit. In relation to forgiveness, to 'bind' is to withhold fellowship, to 'loose' is to forgive.

Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 192 (internal citations omitted). Furthermore, in defining reconciliation and highlighting the importance of forgiveness to it, McNeil writes, "Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish" McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 22.

leadership in the Acts narrative, alluding to Peter's Confession from Matthew 16, Willie Jennings writes:

Luke is not presenting to us in Peter a man moved only by political motivations. This is also a matter of faithfulness to the ministry and apostleship bestowed on the twelve. Faithfulness requires continuity. So the need was for someone who had been with them from the beginning, from baptism to the ascension of Jesus.⁵¹

According to Jennings, only God's work in creation could match the significance of God's Spirit-filled work on the Day of Pentecost.⁵²

Acts 2 describes a diverse *ekklesia*, bringing to fruition Jesus's work of building the church on Peter (Matt. 16:18). Indeed, on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to a geographically, ethnically, and socially diverse group of Jews, they were united by the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:3-4). In addressing its significance, Aaron Kuecher writes, "Pentecost stands in answer to Peter's criterion of social homogeneity and brings Galilean Jesus-followers into contact with other Israelite regional subgroups."⁵³ After specifically noting that there were "devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem" (Acts 2:5), Luke writes, "Amazed and astonished, they asked 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own language?'" (Acts 2:7-8).

In addressing such diversity of identity within Judaism, Kuecher notes, "The initial group of Jesus-followers are identified by the crowd as 'Galileans,' implying both the salience of Galilean identity and differentiation between Galileans and the subgroup identities within the crowd."⁵⁴ It is therefore apparent that on the Day of Pentecost, a diversity of subgroups formed

⁵¹ Willie James Jennings, *Acts: A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017), 26.

⁵² See, *ibid.*, 28.

⁵³ Aaron J. Kuecher, *The Spirit and the 'Other': Social Identity, Ethnicity and Intergroup Reconciliation in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark International, 2011), 111.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 112.

the Trinitarian church originally with “Other” Jews, as “Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs” (2:9–10). Indeed, “Luke . . . identifies the whole crowd as ethnic Israelites.”⁵⁵

Further, in considering the Acts 2 narrative, notwithstanding its diversity of Jews, Willimon reminds readers that God’s mighty works are proclaimed *only* to Jews at this point, because the time is not yet ripe for the divisions between Jews and Gentiles to be healed. Instead, “in Peter’s speech we are listening to a Jew speaking to fellow Jews; linking the story of Jesus with the Scriptures of the Jews.”⁵⁶ Similarly, Jennings notes that, “Peter’s words are about Israel, in Israel, and for Israel . . . This is Israel speaking to Israel, calling to their own with the good news of the intensification of their election and of the personification of the free grace that shaped their existence from its beginning.”⁵⁷ To therefore return to the Matthean analogy of “the keys,” Acts 2 only unlocks the past. It is not until Acts 10 that Peter begins to unlock hope for the church’s future. True reconciliation occurs when Gentiles join the church too.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ibid., 113.

⁵⁶ William H. Willimon, *Acts: Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1998), 35.

⁵⁷ Jennings, *Acts*, 33.

⁵⁸ The Acts 10 narrative, as described below, is lauded for Jews opening the church’s mission to Gentile believers. “[F]or they heard *them* speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, ‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing *these* people who have received the Holy Spirit *just as we have*?’ So he ordered *them* to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ . . .” Acts 10:46-48 (emphasis added). The Acts 10 narrative does not, however, discount the significance of Acts 8 where Phillip baptizes Simon, the Samaritan (8:12-13), and the unnamed Ethiopian eunuch (8:36-38). The eunuch was presumably Gentile, as he could not have been a Jew or proselyte to Judaism (Lev. 21:20; Deut. 23:1). On the significance of him being welcomed into the church, however, Jennings writes, “The eunuch is being brought into a future promised especially for him, one in which he will not be in the shadows or the margins of the people of God, but at a center held together with strong cords that capture our differences, never despising them, but bringing them to glorious light and life” Jennings, *Acts*, 85. Further, Willimon also comments on the significance of the Ethiopian’s baptism, arguably categorizing it as part of a trajectory of reconciliation, in writing:

5. Under Peter's Leadership, the Jewish Church Becomes a Reconciling Entity, admitting Gentiles as "the Other"

The Acts 10 narrative is Luke's account of how the church became a reconciling entity, moving past boundaries of religion and race, when Peter, a Jew, baptizes Cornelius, a Gentile. In noting its overall significance, in moving the church toward reconciliation, Kuecker states:

Indeed, Luke is concerned with the notions that 'Gentiles' could participate in salvation history . . . that non-Israelites could retain ethnic particularity and even that non-Israelites and Israelites could engage in fellowship with one another. But Luke's appreciation of these factors both stems from and, in practice, requires a clear reality: that all who identify with Jesus are incorporated into a group *sharing a common identity* that affirms yet transcends ethnic identity.⁵⁹

The Acts 10 narrative, therefore, speaks to both salvific *and* social reconciliation.

The narrative begins with Luke describing Peter—while praying on a rooftop—receiving a strange vision of various animals descending, which he is commanded to kill and eat (Acts 10:13). In showing an inability to relate to the Other, however, Peter responds with a strict adherence to Jewish dietary laws by stating that he's never eaten anything profane or unclean (v. 14),⁶⁰ only to be told "what God has made clean, you must not call profane" (10:15).⁶¹ This scenario occurs twice more before Peter is moved to action (Acts 10:16).

Luke certainly places this baptism at a strategic position in the narrative. The baptism of the Ethiopian official is situated between the baptism of Samaritans and, in chapter 10, the baptism of a gentile . . . Luke leaves us with the impression that in the unhindered baptism of this man the evangelistic thrust has moved from Jew, to Samaritan, out to the boundaries of the world, at last to the threshold of the gentiles.

Willimon, *Acts*, 72.

⁵⁹ Kuecker, *The Spirit and the 'Other'*, 182.

⁶⁰ Leviticus 11 lists the animals which you may eat (Lev. 11:2) and those you shall not eat (Lev. 11:4). As an observant Jew, Peter would have understood these lists from infancy. C. Peter Wagner, *The Book of Acts: A Commentary* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2008), 212.

⁶¹ Willimon also reminds us that dietary laws, for Jews, are not just a matter of etiquette or peculiar cultural habits; they are a matter of survival and Jewish identity. Willimon, *Acts*, 96.

Peter's initial resistance, presumably inspired by his background as an observant Jew, arguably exemplifies implicit bias.⁶² "While detailed arguments have been made that concerning the nature of the 'Jew/Gentile' boundary, especially as it relates to moral or ritual purity, Luke's primary concern is with the ethnic boundary."⁶³ Indeed, Peter's ability to move past his initial bias, however, leads to reconciliation between him, a Jew, and Cornelius, a Gentile.

Before Peter's Spirit-led acceptance of a Gentile, however, Cornelius was the proverbial Other.

Xenophobic, exclusionary fear of the Other is more than a matter of preference for people whom we enjoy hanging out with, or those with whom we feel most comfortable. In deep fear of the Other, we separate ourselves from others . . . whom we have judged to be so Other as to be beyond the bounds of having any bond between us or any claim upon us.⁶⁴

⁶² In contextualizing the reality of implicit bias, a taskforce from the American Bar Association published the following:

We naturally assign people into various social categories divided by salient and chronically accessible traits, such as age, gender, race, and role. And just as we might have implicit cognitions that help us walk and drive, we have implicit social cognitions that guide our thinking about social categories. Where do these schemas come from? They come from our experiences with other people, some of them direct (i.e., real-world encounters) but most of them vicarious (i.e., relayed to us through stories, books, movies, media, and culture).

American Bar Association, "What is Implicit of Unconscious Bias?" July 24, 2014, available at <https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/initiatives/task-force-implicit-bias/what-is-implicit-bias>. Peter arguably placed Cornelius into a certain social category, immediately after his dream about "unclean food," because of his experiences as an observant Jew. In also elaborating on the reality of how such bias influences interpersonal interactions, the Kirwan Institute provides, "Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control" The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, "Understanding Implicit Bias," available at <http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/research/understanding-implicit-bias>. Before engaging in an egalitarian and Christocentric act of reconciliation, however, Peter clearly showed his bias against non-Jews.

⁶³ Kuecker, *The Spirit and the 'Other'*, 190. Kuecker also supports his argument that Luke's emphasis was on ethnicity, and not religion, by nothing two things: "First, non-Israelites were not subject to ritual purity laws until the Tosefta and Talmud. Second, there is no Levitical law prohibiting social intercourse or shared meals with non-Israelites . . ." Ibid. #.

⁶⁴ William H. Willimon, *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 7.

Further, in noting the importance of moving past fear of the Other, Willimon also writes, “The cross of Christ mysteriously, wondrously unites Jews and gentiles, without regard to ethnicity, gender, race, or class.”⁶⁵

In exemplifying both inclusiveness and social reconciliation, Peter states, “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (10:34–36). In commenting on the central importance of these verses, and noting the Lukan motif of a progression toward inclusiveness, Robert O’Toole argues:

Luke’s theme of the mission to the Gentiles represents social advance. No longer does one have to belong to a given people or observe all the details of the Torah (cf. Acts 15:28-29) to be saved. Luke summarizes his position in Peter’s statement, ‘Truly, I perceive that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him’ (Acts 10:34-35). God gives the Gentiles the same gift he gave to those Pentecost (Acts 11:17).⁶⁶

From a soteriological perspective, the commentary on these key verses in Acts 10 speaks to salvific reconciliation. From an egalitarian perspective, however, it arguably lies at the very heart of social reconciliation. Regardless of ethnicity, sexual orientation, economic background, or geography, *all people are one* in the name of Jesus.

III Conclusion

I have laid a biblical foundation for exploring the concept of reconciliation, in both scriptural and applied contexts, in this first chapter. In detailing how the term emanates from the Pauline corpus, before its popular entry into society-at-large, I have also delineated reconciliation in three different ways: *salvific*, *social*, and *civil*. In doing so, I also set parameters of

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8 (citing 1 Cor. 12:13).

⁶⁶ Robert F. O’Toole, “Luke’s Position on Politics and Society in Luke-Acts,” in *Political Issues in Luke-Acts*, ed. Richard J. Cassidy and Phillip J. Scharper (Marynoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 10.

consideration. Further, by tracing Peter's leadership from Matthew and Acts, I have also outlined a biblical trajectory of reconciliation that moved the *ekklesia* toward an inclusiveness, premised on Peter's leadership. The church progressed to embrace a diverse group of Jews, a Samaritan, an Ethiopian eunuch, and Cornelius, its first identified Gentile.

I will now build upon this chapter's foundation and further examine how social reconciliation appears as a biblically-based and egalitarian-like ethic that is illustrated in select portions of Paul's letters. This ethic is critical in relating to contemporary aspects of reconciliation because it is what motivated the clergy-led civil rights movement and reframed reconciliation as a civil act.

Chapter 2: Social Reconciliation: Paul's Theology of Equality in Christ Jesus

The basic organization of the Roman world was derived from that of the family, which was highly structured and hierarchal . . . Thus, within the hierarchy of the family, the husband stood at the top, then the wife, then the children, and finally the various slaves and attendants.

* * *

Any group that argued that men and women were equal . . . or that slaves were the equal of their masters would be open to charges of treason . . . On that basis, any Roman official who read in Paul's letter to the Galatians that in Christ differences between men and women, Jews and Greeks and free and slave have been done away with (3:28) would have reason to charge Christians with treason, since such views undermined the very rationale by which Rome justified its domination of the Mediterranean world . . . Having Christ rather than Caesar as Lord was therefore a risky thing in the empire, and the promise it represented and the difficulties it brought will both be apparent in the letters Paul wrote to those communities of Christians scatters around the Mediterranean Sea.⁶⁷

I Paul's Theology in Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation: An Introductory Overview

In chapter 1, I detailed a biblical trajectory of reconciliation by exploring select scriptures that moved the *ekklesia* toward inclusiveness. The common trait was Peter's leadership, culminating with the Acts 10 narrative wherein Peter baptized Cornelius, the first Gentile recorded as joining the church. In building upon this foundation, I now connect Peter's leadership to Paul's theology by exploring the church's egalitarian-like move toward equitable social relations. Indeed, as the above-cited epigraph highlights, Paul's theology of equality was revolutionary in the Greco-Roman world.

Whereas the previous chapter introduced the three types of reconciliation (salvific, social, and civil), this chapter specifically focuses on and develops *social reconciliation* as manifest in

⁶⁷ Paul J. Achtemeier, Joel B. Green & Marianne Meye Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2001), 287-88.

Paul's theology.⁶⁸ Moreover, this chapter also sets a foundation for *civil reconciliation*—the practical implementation of Paul's social reconciliation—as the focal point of the next chapter. Here, however, I provide a historical contextualization of social reconciliation through three select examples from Paul's authentic letters,⁶⁹ along with an overview of Paul's underlying theology. There are arguably no better examples of social reconciliation in the Pauline corpus, exemplifying a theology of equality, than: (1) the most popular and frequently cited part of Galatians (Gal. 3:26-28); (2) the portion of the Corinthian correspondence dealing with abuses of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-22); and, (3) the four chapters from Romans that most emphasize equality in Christ, from both theological and ethical perspectives (Rom. 5-8). Before exploring these scriptural examples, however, I overview Paul's background.

As a Pharisaic Jew, Paul became a great apologist, insofar as his conversion experience influenced his writings. As a lens through which we can view Paul's rhetoric and underlying theology, I begin this chapter by exploring Paul, as a person. After overviewing Paul's background and laying a foundation for how it influenced his theology, this chapter moves into a high-level, overarching analysis of the three previously referenced biblical texts. I argue they best demonstrate social reconciliation in Paul's authentic letters.

⁶⁸ My research suggests the majority of Pauline scholars have focused only on the vertical (salvific) aspect of reconciliation. This focus has diverted scholars from discussing reconciliation's social and political implications in everyday life. Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 43. This chapter attempts to fill a void.

⁶⁹ As previously highlighted, I support the view that only seven of the New Testament's thirteen writings attributed to Paul are authentic. In canonical order, they are believed to be: (1) Romans; (2) 1 Corinthians; (3) 2 Corinthians; (4) Galatians; (5) Philippians; (6) 1 Thessalonians; and (7) Philemon. See Victor Paul Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul: Selected Issues* (3d ed.) (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 11-12. Further, as will also be highlighted below, especially with respect to my analysis of Romans, "The fact that every single one of Paul's 'undisputed' letters is addressed to specific situations counts as a strong support for the assumption that Romans could legitimately be understood as written to deal with concrete problems in the life of Christians in Rome." Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 102. These problems include ethnic and social differences between Jewish and Gentile Christians. *Ibid.*, 101-04.

Furthermore, I also engage in an incorporated literature review, highlighting reconciliation in Paul's theology and surveying various Pauline scholars to further develop my argument on social reconciliation. Paul's theology of equality—the heart of social reconciliation—was not limited to the Greco-Roman world. Instead, as a structural point of transition, I argue that social reconciliation, exemplified in the three previously referenced biblical texts, was later implemented by clergy and laity *as civil reconciliation*, in the twentieth century American Civil Rights Movement.

For twentieth century Christians, Jews, and other faith adherents in the United States, Paul's theology of equality was far removed from the legal and social divisions of the South, especially those “justified” by Christianity.⁷⁰ As an organizational point of transition, therefore, this chapter concludes by building upon Paul's egalitarian-like theology of equality in social reconciliation in order to contextualize civil reconciliation in the following chapter and examine the work of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.⁷¹

II Paul's Background and Uniqueness in the Biblical Canon

Paul is unique among biblical characters. Additionally, along with Jesus and Peter, Paul is arguably one of the most influential figures in the New Testament. Marion Soards reminds us that over one-half of Luke's narrative in the Book of Acts is an account of Paul's career, from

⁷⁰ In *Reconstructing the Gospel*, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove explores some of the racial and social divisions that have been a part of Christian practice and custom in the American South. In opining on some practices, he writes:

Christianity in America has not occasionally turned away from the gospel's truth, like a sailor tempted by the sirens' call. It has, rather, turned the gospel against itself, tearing in two the people who adopted this form of religion without letting its truth change their lives. This subversion of the gospel put a crack in the foundation of our common life. It opened up a great gulf between people that has thwarted our pursuit of genuine community ever since. And it has left a womb deep in our hearts.

Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom From Slaveholder Religion* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018), 16.

⁷¹ See, generally, Adam Faircloth, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1987).

the time he was a persecutor of the church, through his imprisonment in Rome, to the end of his life.⁷² Moreover, thirteen New Testament letters, comprising the “Pauline Corpus,” are attributed to Paul as their author.⁷³ Indeed, Abraham Smith describes Paul as “a towering figure in the history of Christian thought.”⁷⁴ Moreover, in reflecting on Paul’s significance, Victor Furnish writes, “In Germany, William Wrede (1859-1906) spoke for many when he identified Paul as ‘the second founder of Christianity,’ and lamented that, while Jesus’s teaching had exerted ‘the better’ influence on Christianity, Paul had exerted ‘the stronger.’”⁷⁵ Paul’s influence on the development of Christianity is therefore significant.

(A) Understanding Paul’s Background and Culture

As a foundational matter, in order to understand social reconciliation in Paul’s authentic writings, I believe it is beneficial to examine Paul, as the biblical reader meets him, through Luke’s introduction in Acts,⁷⁶ as well as through the limited autobiographical information Paul himself provides. As a point of acknowledgment, Ralph Martin highlights that there might be confusion about Paul in that: (1) there is some dispute over the exact circumstances surrounding his early years; (2) Luke’s record can be read in more than one way (Acts 22:3; 26:5); and (3) it

⁷² Marion L. Soards, *The Apostle Paul: An Introduction to His Writings and Teaching* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 7.

⁷³ In addition to the seven authentic epistles previously cited in note 3, six other letters are considered “deutero-Pauline” in that, although they bear Paul’s name, their authenticity is greatly disputed. The other six letters comprising the Pauline Corpus, in canonical order, include: (1) Ephesians; (2) Colossians; (3) 2 Thessalonians; (4) 1 Timothy; (5) 2 Timothy; and Titus. As Professor Furnish highlights, “Ordinarily, scholars attribute these six disputed letters to at least four writers and date them (variously) to the decades following Paul’s death, from as early as the 70s to as late as the first decade of the second century.” Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 12.

⁷⁴ Abraham Smith, “Paul and African American Biblical Interpretation,” in *True to Our Native Land: An African American Biblical Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 31.

⁷⁵ Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 10.

⁷⁶ In his letter to Philemon, Paul writes that Luke was one of his fellow workers. (Phlm. 24). Presumably, therefore, Luke directly observed the events that influenced his chronicling of Paul’s missionary work in Acts.

is uncertain as to whether Paul traces his boyhood training to his life in Jerusalem, as a student of Rabbi Gamaliel, or to Tarsus, the place of his birth (Acts 21:39).⁷⁷ My intention is not to clarify each area of ambiguity; I only overview Paul's background insofar as it influenced his theology.

In noting the significance of Paul's Damascus Road conversion experience and subsequent itinerant missionary work, my literature review supports the argument that Paul's theology exemplified social reconciliation, as much or arguably more than eschatology and soteriology. Consistent with this perspective, with respect to First Corinthians, Margaret Mitchell writes:

1 Corinthians is throughout an argument for ecclesial unity . . . or thesis statement of the argument, in 1:10: 'I urge you, brothers and sisters, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to all say the same thing, and to not let there be factions among you, but to be reconciled in the same mind and in the same opinion.'⁷⁸

Moreover, Mitchell also adds, "Factionalism, an inherently political problem which is often, as here, intertwined with religious issues and motivations, is combatted by Paul throughout 1 Corinthians" ⁷⁹ This theme of social unity (and equality) *because of Jesus*, is consistent as an undergirding focus of the selected texts from Galatians (3:26-28), the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 11:17-22) and Romans (Rom. 5-8), all discussed herein.

1. Before His Acts 9 Conversion Experience, Paul (Saul) was a Hellenized Diaspora Jew and Persecutor of the Church

Scripture is silent as to when Paul was born. Although Paul's letters do not reference his place of birth, Luke's narrative in Acts indicates Paul was born in Tarsus (Acts 21:39; 22:3). Since it also apparent from Paul's letters that he knew Greek, as a native language, and that he

⁷⁷ See, generally, Ralph P. Martin, *Reconciliation: A Study of Paul's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1989), 9.

⁷⁸ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language and Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 1 (internal citations omitted).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

was well-skilled in interacting with both Jews and Gentiles (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 9:19-23), it is likely that Paul was from the Diaspora (Jews living outside of Palestine), which included Tarsus.⁸⁰ In considering biographical portions of Paul's life in Acts and Paul's own references in his epistles, "Saul of Tarsus began his religious life and career as a Pharisee, that is, as an adherent to a religious way of understanding and doing the will of Israel's God."⁸¹ Stated otherwise, Paul the Christian apologist was also once Paul (Saul) the Jew.

Acts indicates Paul's father was Jewish and that Paul was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). In noting Paul's background and heritage, "He boasts from time to time in his letters of his Jewish past in rebuttal to other missionaries who caused problems in the churches that he had founded (see Phil 3 and 2 Cor 11). In so doing, Paul reveals that prior to being a Christian he was a zealous Pharisee."⁸² Moreover, Paul writes of this background in Galatians:

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors (Gal. 1:13-14).

Presumably, therefore, Paul's Pharisaic ideology and love for Judaism caused him to become a persecutor of the church in Judea, before his conversion experience.

Luke records Paul's pre-conversion zeal at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58-8:3). In Galatians, Paul actually writes of being keenly aware of how his reputation preceded him and how it might be an impediment to his ministry. "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, and I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea that are in Christ; they only

⁸⁰ Achtemeier, Green & Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament*, 289.

⁸¹ Martin, *Reconciliation*, 9.

⁸² Soards, *The Apostle Paul*, 19.

heard it said, ‘The one who formerly was persecuting us is now proclaiming the faith he once tried to destroy.’” (Gal. 1:21-23). Further, with respect to how Paul’s reputation preceded him, as part of his famous conversion narrative, Luke also writes of Ananias’s fear, in response to a divine directive to minister to Paul. “But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem.’” (Acts 9:13).

In elaborating on Paul’s background as influencing his zealous persecution of the church, Malina and Pilch write:

Paul was an Israelite. He was formed in the Pharisaic style of living the Mosaic Torah; hence he believed that ‘as to righteousness under the Law’ he was blameless.’ In terms of the values embodied by Pharisaic ideology, his zeal moved him to become a ‘persecutor of the church,’ that is of the Jesus group he encountered in Judea.⁸³

This persecution, however, was *before* Paul’s conversion (Acts 9:3-19; 22:4-16; & 26:9-18). Stated otherwise, it was before Paul came to believe the God of Israel called him to be an Israelite prophet and proclaim the gospel to Israelites resident among non-Israelites.⁸⁴

In further exploring Paul’s presumed background, Soards impliedly analyzes both the substance and rhetorical style of Paul’s authentic writings to draw conclusions about Paul’s education and Hellenistic exposure.

⁸³ Bruce J. Malina & John J. Pilch, *Social Science Commentary on Letters of Paul* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 10.

⁸⁴ On the note of Paul’s calling and role as a prophet, he writes the following in Galatians:

But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus (Gal. 1:15-17).

See also Acts 9:15 (detailing Paul’s call as a missionary to the Gentiles). As Galatians therefore makes clear, in Paul’s classic form of demonstrating an intimate familiarity with the Hebrew Scriptures, his reference “to being set apart before being born” is reminiscent of an Israelite’s prophetic call (see, e.g., Jer. 1:5; see also Isa 49:1).

As it is clear that Paul's past was in Pharisaic Judaism, it is also certain that Paul was a Hellenized Jew. . . . Indeed, Paul's own writings show signs of Hellenistic education. The basic mastery of the skills of reading, thinking, argumentation, and expression in writing are all the hallmarks of Hellenistic education . . . From his quotation of the Old Testament one sees that Paul read the scriptures in their Greek version, the Septuagint. Paul is thoroughly familiar with the conventions of popular Hellenistic philosophy and methods of literary interpretation. Moreover, he calls himself *Paul* (Greek, *Paulos*), not *Saul* (Hebrew, *Saul*), and his metaphors are drawn from the Greco-Roman world of sports and military.⁸⁵

It is therefore apparent, although Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Phil 3.5) whose chief hero was Saul,⁸⁶ he was a Hellenized, Diaspora Jew, who only referred to himself as Paul.

Furthermore, in similarly arguing Paul's Hellenistic background influenced his gospel proclamation, Roetzel writes:

Paul's early years were spent in Tarsus, a center of Stoic teaching. Although his letters show signs of Stoic influence (e.g., his use of the diatribe), Paul's outlook differs markedly from that of his Stoic contemporaries. His gospel is fundamentally historical; it is rooted in a historical event, based on a historical person, anticipates a fulfillment in the historical (real) future. Unlike the Stoic view of freedom as spiritual autonomy, freedom for Paul means liberation from hostile powers (death, sin, etc.) for service to Christ. The Stoic is confident man can win freedom through his own efforts; Paul sees freedom as the result of action by God. And whereas the Stoic's concern centers on freedom, and thus on the individual, *Christianity, says Paul, concerns life, and thus the interaction of men [and women].*⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Soards, *The Apostle Paul*, 19-20 (emphasis in original). In a similar vein, noting Paul's Hellenistic training, Calvin Roetzel also highlights:

Scholars long ago recognized Paul's preference for the Greek Old Testament. Because the use of the Greek text was so pervasive and because of the influence it had on Paul and his hearers, some explanation is necessary. In the third century B.C. the Scriptures were translated into Greek because most Jews of the Diaspora, i.e., Jews living outside Palestine, no longer understood Hebrew. By the first century this translation enjoyed wide acceptance among Diaspora Jews, and doubtless was the preferred text of Paul and his congregations.

Calvin J. Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul: Conversations in Context* (2d. ed)(Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 6-7.

⁸⁶Achtemeier, Green & Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament*, 289.

⁸⁷ Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 22 (emphasis added)(internal citations omitted). Further, in defining the diatribe and illustrating how it was used as a Hellenistic-influenced rhetorical tool in Paul's correspondence, Roetzel argues:

Long ago Rudolf Bultmann recognized that Paul used a method of disputation called the diatribe which had been popularized by Greek Stoic philosophers. The diatribe is a form of argumentation

Roetzel, therefore, implies Paul's theology of freedom directly stems from human beings' ability to interact with one another on an equal basis. This indeed exemplifies social reconciliation.

2. Saul Becomes Paul: Experiences Underscore Theology

According to Luke's narrative, after Paul's conversion experience (Acts 9:1-19), Paul began to bear witness by proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 9:20-22). Martin argues, "This man was born and raised a Jew; he lived his adult life in a Graeco-Roman environment and, in a dramatic turnaround of direction, he became a Christian."⁸⁸ In a similar vein, Furnish writes, "Even after his call to apostleship, Paul's faith and thought continued to be shaped by the Jewish Scriptures, although he read them now, from the standpoint of his new life in Christ."⁸⁹ It might therefore be argued that although Paul became a Christian, in that he was clearly a follower of Jesus the Christ, Paul also maintained his Jewish heritage, because of his continued allegiance to aspects of Pharisaic Judaism.

According to Luke's narrative, well after Paul's original Acts 9 apostolic call, Paul himself cites his Judaism while on trial for, among other things, promulgating a belief in the resurrection—a belief rejected by Sadducees, but accepted by Pharisees. "When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, 'Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of a Pharisee . . .'" (Acts 23:6). In supporting this proposition, Martin highlights:

that places questions on the lips of the hypothetical objector then attempts to answer them. For example, the Letter to the Romans is sprinkled with liberally with questions like: 'Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?' (6:1); 'What then shall we say? That the law is sin?' (7:7); 'Is there injustice on God's part?' (9:14) etc. although the objection or question is hypothetical, it is rooted in a real life experience . . .

Ibid., 6.

⁸⁸ Martin, *Reconciliation*, 9.

⁸⁹ Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 57.

Paul no less remained committed to Jewish monotheism throughout his life, and whatever adjustments and modifications were required in the light of new truth that dawned with the revelation of Jesus as Israel's Messiah and the head of the universe, he seems never to have compromised—at least to his own satisfaction—this fundamental tenet drawn from his ancestral past. See Galatians 3:20 ('God is one') and 1 Corinthians 8:5-6 ('For us there is one God').⁹⁰

Accordingly, I argue Paul's theological positions were greatly influenced by his background and experience in encountering Jesus, the Messiah sent by the God of Israel. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor supports this position, describing Paul's conversion by indicating, "His encounter with the Christ revealed the truth of what he had once taken as falsehood by forcing a new assessment of what became the Christological and soteriological poles of his gospel."⁹¹ Paul's theology, therefore, resulted from both his Pharisaic past *and* personal encounter with the resurrected Christ.

3. Paul's Theology Was About Equitable Relations AND Soteriology

Although Paul clearly writes from an eschatological perspective, anticipating the *parousia* (see, e.g., 1 Thess. 4:13-17; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; and Rom. 13:11-12), Paul's theology of equality is arguably as present as any salvific focus. Brad Braxton explores this liberationist perspective, basing his argument on Paul's experience.⁹² Braxton actually champions Paul's gospel of freedom by arguing,

Paul offers to the Gentile Galatian converts (and to other groups that have been marginalized) the criterion of experience as the basis for acceptance by God. In the case of the Galatians, it is the experience of faith that was confirmed by the activity of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Paul may value the role of experience highly

⁹⁰ Martin, *Reconciliation*, 10.

⁹¹ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996), 79 (internal citation omitted).

⁹² See, generally, Brad R. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2002).

because it was an experience that transformed him into the apostle of the Gentiles.⁹³

In following Braxton's logic, just as Paul's conversion experience was the basis for his liberation, the experiences of others, and their faith as predicated on those experiences, is the basis for their liberation, too.

Charles Cousar emphasizes this same point, in elaborating on God's grace as an intricate theme in Galatians:

Because the fundamental nature of the gospel is grace, no adjustments or stipulations which suggest it might be conditional can be tolerated. Paul's way of arguing the authority of this gospel is to point to his own history—that he received the gospel from Christ and not from a human source; that it transformed his vocation from being a persecutor of the church to being an apostle to the Gentiles . . .⁹⁴

The theme of grace is, therefore, consistent in Paul's theology (see, e.g., Rom. 5:20-21; Gal. 5:4).

III Social Reconciliation in Select Portions of Galatians, First Corinthians and Romans

In chapter 1, I distinguished between salvific and social reconciliation. Whereas salvific reconciliation relates to humanity being reconciled to God *through Jesus*, social reconciliation contemplates humans being reconciled to one another *because of Jesus*. In Paul's authentic letters, social reconciliation is exemplified in an egalitarian-like ethic calling for equitable relationships in the *ekklesia*.

In building upon the previously set foundation of Paul's background and theology, and moving toward an understanding of social reconciliation, I argue Paul's thinking was shaped not only by his Jewish heritage and of course his conversion experience, but also by the currents of

⁹³ Ibid., 57 (internal references omitted).

⁹⁴ Charles B. Cousar, *Galatians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 63.

the Greco-Roman world.⁹⁵ Some of those socio-political and cultural currents came to bear in Paul's authentic writings. For example, "as an apostle to the Gentiles, Paul encouraged his congregations not only to continue to participate, as good citizens, in the life of the city, but also to behave in a manner that would bring approval from the outsiders."⁹⁶ These "outsiders" are the proverbial Others with whom Paul sought equitable relations, as contextualized in Galatians (Gal. 3:26-28); the Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 11: 17-22); and Romans (Rom. 5-8). After addressing those respective texts, and before concluding this chapter, I will return to the previous chapter's indication that social reconciliation requires: (1) equal treatment of others; (2) forgiveness for previous transgressions; and (3) a recognition that forgiveness is a ministry left to the church.

(A) Social Reconciliation in Galatians: Paul's Most Definitive Statement on Equality Because of Jesus

1. An Organizational and Theological Overview of Galatians

As a matter of organization, although these categories are not rigid or exclusive, Galatians can be divided into three sections: *history* (1-2); *theology* (3-4); and *ethics* (5-6).⁹⁷ Braxton notes their categorical overlap by indicating, "One should not treat each section as separately, but as constituent parts of Paul's overall defense of his gospel of freedom."⁹⁸ Because the underlying focus of this chapter is theological, my primary concern in contextualizing the Galatian correspondence is the second section, chapters 3-4, wherein Paul makes "frequently

⁹⁵ Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 66.

⁹⁶ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 50-51.

⁹⁷ Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 56-57. Cousar similarly writes about Galatians, indicating that after the letter's introduction, it can be categorized into three main parts: (1:6-2:21), (3:1-5:12), and (5:13-6:10). Cousar, *Galatians*, 7-8.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

reference Old Testament texts which he views as pointing to the Christ-event and the inclusion of non-Jews.”⁹⁹

In addressing Galatians’ theological significance, Cousar writes, “The theological excitement of Galatians lies in the radical interpretation Paul makes of the meaning of God’s grace. It is more than a doctrine; it is an experience. At the same time, it is *the* doctrine which undergirds all that Paul fights for in this letter.”¹⁰⁰ I argue Galatians’ theological focus, and the letter’s central theme, is freedom. Nancy Bedford expounds on freedom’s significance in Galatians by distinguishing the type of freedom at issue. She writes, “It is not the freedom to consume or dominate but the freedom to love and to be transformed even more in God’s image and likeness.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, Cousar also notes that recent interpreters of Galatians have found guidance for the responsible use of freedom in the letter.¹⁰² Social reconciliation embraces the responsible use of freedom, as a means to love and accept Others as equal, because of Jesus.

⁹⁹ Cousar, *Galatians*, 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 8 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰¹ Nancy Elizabeth Bedford, *Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 11; see also Achtemeier, Green & Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament*, 371.

¹⁰² Cousar, *Galatians*, 1. Roetzel also argues that part of Paul’s reason for writing Galatians was related to freedom. He writes that Paul wanted to

encourage his listeners to claim full membership in God’s kingdom by grace and not as righteous proselytes via Judaism. Since the Galatians came to enjoy life in the Spirit through ‘hearing with faith’ free from ‘works of the Law’ Paul would have them continue in the way of responsible freedom.

Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 68 (internal citations omitted).

2. A Closer Look at Paul's Theology of Equality in Galatians 3:26-28

Galatians provides Paul's most definitive account of social equality,¹⁰³ a theology best exemplified in Galatians 3:26-28. Indeed, it is arguably the most pronounced statement on equitable relations in the entire New Testament.

In Galatians 3, while rebuking the teachings of other itinerant preachers—teachings Paul felt were inconsistent with a theology of equality in Christ—Paul wrote to the fledgling church:

for in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-28).

In seeing no need for Gentiles to convert to Judaism *before* becoming Christian, Paul obviously intended for membership in the church to be open to Jews and Gentiles, alike.

Most interpreters believe Paul was quoting from a baptismal liturgy used in his and other Christian congregations, and that the same theology is present in Romans 10:12, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Colossians 3:11. Furnish writes on the social aspect of the Galatians passage as follows:

Within its original liturgical setting, it was addressed to newly baptized persons, declaring them to have been transferred into a believing community that participates in a wholly new order of existence. They now inhabit a realm in which their lives are no longer defined by the religious, gender, and social distinctions they had previously taken for granted¹⁰⁴

This undergirding theology, presumably adopted in a baptismal liturgy but also cited by Paul in support of equality in the church, well illustrates social reconciliation. Indeed, as Braxton argues, “in its original usage and also here in Galatians, this baptismal confession was meant to suggest

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Furnish, *The Moral Teachings of Paul*, 106-07.

that ‘through Christ the old racial schisms and cultural divisions had been healed.’”¹⁰⁵ This is clearly within the realm of social reconciliation, as individuals are viewed as equals because of Jesus.

In writing Galatians, “Paul recognized that what baptism into Christ does to cultural, religious, and ethnic distinctions, it also does to social and gender distinctions. In Christ, these . . . have been relativized, even though they may remain.”¹⁰⁶ In going a step further, however, with respect to Paul’s three-fold baptismal liturgy of equal welcome into the *ekklesia*, Braxton argues,

the confession focuses on three spheres that were and are notorious hotbeds of social strife: *ethnic relationships* (‘there is neither Jew nor Greek’), *social class* (‘there is neither slave nor free’), and *gender relationships* (‘there is neither male and female’). Paul is cognizant of the importance of all three spheres in fostering social harmony in the church.¹⁰⁷

Stated otherwise, social reconciliation, as found in Galatians 3, means all humans are reconciled in relation to one another because all people are equal in the body of Christ.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 93 (internal citations omitted).

¹⁰⁶ Furnish, *The Moral Teachings of Paul*, 107-08.

¹⁰⁷ Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 93 (emphasis in original). Moreover, in considering the overall context of the Galatian correspondence and the issues that necessitated Paul writing it, Braxton also argues, “In Galatians 3 . . . he focuses primarily on the first, namely ethnic relationships. One could argue that the establishment of a proper relationship between Jews and Gentiles who are ‘in Christ Jesus’ is the central challenge that precipitates the writing of the entire letter.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ With respect to this oft-cited metaphor, and Paul’s theology of equality in Galatians, Furnish reminds us:

The same baptismal affirmation is reflected in 1 Cor. 12:13 as Paul begins to develop his image of the church as the ‘body of Christ’ (12:12-27). This passage provides a closer look at what he understands the traditional statement to mean. It means that those who are baptized into Christ, although they have different gifts, *are one in Christ and bound together in their dependence on the same God* (vv. 4-11) . . . It means that they are no longer beholden to society’s notions of who are to be esteemed as ‘honorable’ and who are to be dismissed as unpresentable; *the apostle urges the Corinthians to regard each and every member of Christ’s body as not only ‘respectable; but ‘indispensable.’*

Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 108 (emphasis added). As will be highlighted in the Corinthian correspondence pericope addressing abuses of the Lord’s Supper, as well as the overview of Romans, this theology of equality seems consistent with Paul.

3. Baptism is Supposed to Bring Diverse People into a Diverse Church

Bedford also reflects on the Galatians 3 passage by sharing, “Different people with diverse ethnicities, social status, and genders are invited to relate in new ways in Christ. They are not forced into sameness; to be equal does not mean to be identical.”¹⁰⁹ In further illustrating Bedford’s point of equality *and* diversity in Christ, Braxton argues, “Paul’s entire evangelistic campaign was designed to bring the Gentiles into the church as Gentiles. In other words, Paul preached a law-free gospel among the Gentiles in order to insure ethnic diversity in the Church.”¹¹⁰

Further, Braxton also argues, “When Paul says, ‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male and female,’ he is not asserting the obliteration of difference, but rather the obliteration of *dominance*.”¹¹¹ In this context, the obliteration of dominance deals with the elimination of ethnic, social, and class divisions, as well as hierarchal social practices that were common in the Greco-Roman world.¹¹² Social reconciliation maintains that if differences remain but dominances are obliterated, the *ekklesia* Jesus built on Peter’s faith (Matt. 16:13-19) is supposed to be a socially diverse place where *all* people are treated equally because of their common entry through baptism. Accordingly, with respect to the Acts 10 example from chapter 1 and in further illustrating Braxton’s reference to equality in Galatians 3, when the Jewish Peter baptized the Gentile Cornelius, the two were no longer separated by a relationship of social or ethnic dominance. Instead, as Peter came to realize, “God shows no

¹⁰⁹ Bedford, *Galatians*, 97-98.

¹¹⁰ Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 94.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* (emphasis in original).

¹¹² See Achtemeier, Green & Thompson, *Introducing the New Testament*, 287-88.

partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34). Accordingly, Paul’s theology of equality exemplifies social reconciliation because all members of the church are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

4. The Focus of Paul’s Theology of Equality Was About His Then-Present State

I have argued that Paul’s theology—formed by his Pharisaic background, conversion experience, and sociocultural exposure in the Greco-Roman world—was concerned about equitable relations as much as any soteriological theology of salvation based on the future. Braxton shares and unpacks this perspective, specifically looking at Gal. 3:28.

In exploring the social context that necessitated Paul writing Galatians, Braxton notes that in the final section of chapter 3, Paul continues to emphasize that faith defines those who have entered into the covenant created by the Christ event. Paul wrote, “for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.” (Gal. 3:26).¹¹³ After Paul’s exploration of the communal implications of faith in Christ, through the previously cited baptismal confession, Braxton also argues that debate and confusion have always surrounded verse 28. In addressing this debate, and verse 28’s notoriety, he specifically writes about what he describes as two misconceptions.

First, some have wrongly assumed that Paul’s declaration in v. 28 should be read as an eschatological ideal—a laudable goal that will only be fully accomplished upon the return of Christ. One can question this on rhetorical and grammatical grounds.

This observation does not do justice to the urgency of the ‘rhetorical situation’ in Galatians. Undoubtedly, eschatological hope—the assurance that God will return and assist in the establishment of God’s complete sovereignty—plays an integral role in Paul’s overall theology. Paul believed Christ’s return would be imminent. Yet in the Galatian churches a crisis faced Paul that was even more pressing than Christ’s return. With the defection of his converts looming on the horizon, it is unlikely that Paul would resort to speculations about the eschatological harmony that Christ would establish. Paul’s concern in Galatians 3 is for *present* harmony.

¹¹³ Braxton, *No Longer Slaves*, 92.

From this perspective, without a present remedy to this crisis there very well would be no future for his converts.¹¹⁴

Further, in moving from a rhetorical argument to a grammatical analysis of Paul's writing,

Braxton also provides,

grammatically one should note the prevalence of present tense in verse 28 and, for that matter, in vv. 26-29. Paul declares: 'there *is* neither Jew nor Greek, there *is* neither slave nor free, there *is* neither male and female.' With the exception of two verbs in the past tense in v. 27, all the verbs in vv. 26-29 are in the present tense. Whatever meaning one gives to v. 28, clearly Paul is conveying a present reality, not a future possibility.

The second misconception is that Christian unity implies or entails the absence of social distinctions. Proponents of this view content that unity in the Church is achieved through abolishing social distinctions and replacing them with an amalgamated Christian identity. If Paul's declaration in 3:28 was meant to depict the abolishing of social distinctions, he would have effectively undercut the force of his whole argument. Paul's entire evangelistic campaign was designed to bring the Gentiles into the church as Gentiles. In other words, Paul preached a law-free gospel among the Gentiles in order to insure ethnic diversity in the Church.¹¹⁵

Paul's theology of equality was, therefore, as much about the "kingdom at hand" as it was about the "kingdom to come." Accordingly, this Galatians 3 example truly illustrates the heart of social reconciliation.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 94 (internal citation omitted) (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁵ Ibid. (emphasis in original).

¹¹⁶ As an aside, in the Corinthian correspondence, Paul attempted to bring about unity among a very fractured people. To achieve this goal, he used the almost exact same rhetoric of Galatians 3:28, as he described unity in the "body of Christ." Paul wrote:

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. (1 Cor. 12:12-14).

In writing to the Corinthians, just as in his correspondence to the Galatians, Paul celebrates diversity. His Corinthian metaphoric reference is not for assimilation into the body or elimination of differences. He instead celebrates the body's diversity while also affirming its unity. See, generally, Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2010), 590.

(B) Do This in Remembrance of Me: Social Reconciliation in the Corinthians' Celebration of the Lord's Supper

1. An Overview of the Corinthian Correspondence

At the onset of my exploration of the Corinthian correspondence, it bears noting that by using the term “Corinthians correspondence,” I suggest carefully reading First and Second Corinthians indicates other letters to the church at Corinth *are not* included in the Pauline corpus. 1 Cor. 5:9, for example, references a previous letter. This suggests 1 Corinthians is at least Paul’s *second letter* to the church at Corinth. Further, in 2 Cor. 2:3-4 and 7:8, Paul references still separate, obviously non-canonical correspondence that is clearly *not* First Corinthians. This separate correspondence might be termed his “Letter of Tears.” Although it is impossible to know exactly how many letters Paul actually wrote to the Corinthians, scholarship suggests there were no less than four and as many as seven.¹¹⁷ As Soards writes, “any number of other unmentioned letters are possible.”¹¹⁸ It is within this context that I explore where the pericope from First Corinthians fits into the series of letters.

First Corinthians makes clear that Paul’s motivation in writing was at least two-fold. First, there was an oral report from “Chloe’s people” (presumably members of a house church meeting at Chloe’s residence) informing Paul about divisions among the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:11). Paul also wrote to respond to a letter he apparently received from a delegation that raised issues about morality (1 Cor. 7:1). With respect to the report Paul received from Chloe’s people, he learned social factions among members of the church were emanating from special affections they had for the minister by whom they were baptized (e.g., Paul, Apollos, or Cephas), instead of a commonality because of baptism into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:3-23). It is, at least in part,

¹¹⁷ See, e.g., Soards, *The Apostle Paul*, 69.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

because of pronounced social divisions that Paul wrote the Corinthian correspondence. One such division Paul addressed was the Corinthians' hierarchical social practices, associated with their observance (and abuse) of the Lord's Supper.

2. Paul's Theology of Equality Shows Clear Disdain for Communal Divisions

The Corinthian correspondence makes clear that Paul's vision of communal unity in Jesus's name is in conflict with the Corinthians' hierarchal social practices. Before exploring Paul's admonition, however, it is helpful to first overview a practical point made by Richard Hays, who helps contextualize what an abuse of the Lord's Supper might have looked like.

Hays makes clear that the Corinthians' observance of the Lord's Supper had nothing to do with contemporary sacramental rights, often occurring in a church building, that are customarily part of a liturgy. Instead, he notes, the observation of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian context was literally a common meal that was shared in community at a private home.¹¹⁹ In following typical social norms, however, the Corinthians allowed more privileged members of the community to receive more and better food than others during the observation.¹²⁰

Paul was unequivocally clear in expressing his disdain for hierarchal social practices. In relevant part, he wrote to the church as follows:

For when it comes time to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you! (1 Cor. 11:21-22).

In reflecting on this passage, Roetzel indicates, "some celebrated the Lord's Supper as if it were the Great Messianic Banquet reserved for the end of time. In their enthusiasm they stuffed

¹¹⁹ See Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 193.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194.

themselves, saving nothing for Christian slaves whose arrival was delayed by assigned tasks. Some were gorged and drunken; not a crumb remained for others.”¹²¹ This class-based practice was the very antithesis of social reconciliation.

In addressing the obvious social divisions among the Corinthians, Hays also writes, “Paul regards this as a humiliation of the community and an abuse of the Supper of the Lord, whose own example contradicts with such status divisions.”¹²² One might argue, therefore, with respect to Paul’s theology of equality, that the Corinthians’ observation of the Lord’s Supper should have shown a unity in their remembrance of Jesus.¹²³ In an obviously similar vein, when writing to the Galatians, Paul argued they were unified because of Jesus (Gal. 3:28). Both Galatians 3:23-28 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, therefore, aptly exemplify social reconciliation.

(C) Social Reconciliation in Romans 5-8: An Ethical Implication of Paul’s Theology of Salvation

In the cited passages from Galatians and First Corinthians, I contextualized an egalitarian-like ethic of social reconciliation, based on equality in the body of Christ. In my third example, Romans 5-8, I build on the former examples by again emphasizing social equality in the church through baptism. As highlighted in chapter 1, the *ekklesia* is a diverse body comprised of people of different ethnicities (Acts 10:34). It also includes people from different socioeconomic backgrounds (1 Cor. 11:21-22). In Romans 5-8 we see exactly how Paul addresses members of the church from different ethnic backgrounds.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Roetzel, *The Letters of Paul*, 56.

¹²² Hays, *First Corinthians*, 194.

¹²³ Soards, *The Apostle Paul*, 78.

¹²⁴ This high-level overview of Romans 5-8 looks at the four chapters as a grouped part of Paul’s correspondence to the church(es) at Rome, while simultaneously recognizing that different scholars group Romans’ early chapters in different ways. One group places chapter 5 as a logical conclusion, because of its close linguistic and conceptual affinities, to chapters 1-4. Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul’s Theology*, 116. The

Paul lays out an interconnected relationship between salvific and social reconciliation, making the latter the logical consequence of the prior, while addressing social relations between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians living in Rome. For Paul, therefore, social reconciliation along racial lines is a moral imperative that stems from salvific reconciliation as a way of extending the rule of Jesus.¹²⁵

Insofar as there is a “vertical” plane, representing humanity’s reconciled relationship with God (salvific) and a “horizontal” plane, representing human being’s reconciled relationships with one another (social), Constantineanu interprets Paul’s theology in Romans by bringing the two planes together, as inseparable and interconnected parts, writing as follows:

Paul’s presentation of reconciliation contains an essential horizontal/social dimension. I argue that beginning with Rom. 5.1, Paul uses interchangeably different metaphors and symbols of salvation such as ‘justification’ (vertical category) and ‘peace’, ‘love’, reconciliation’, (horizontal, relational categories), in order to express the inseparability of the two aspects of reconciliation. Paul does not think of two segments, i.e., a vertical one followed by a horizontal one; rather he envisions one complex reality which encompasses the two. He is thus trying to communicate that unity, harmony and acceptance among the believers in Rome are an intrinsic part of the very gospel of reconciliation they profess.¹²⁶

I therefore argue the vertical *and* horizontal planes, symbolizing both salvation and equitable social relations, are interconnected through baptism into the church.

1. Paul’s Ethical (and Behavioral) Implication of Salvific Reconciliation

Paul describes the consequence of human salvation as an ethic that mandates baptized members of the church treat other people equally, regardless of their differences. “Therefore, we

largest collective of interpreters, however, places chapter 5 with the next section, chapters 6 through 8, because of its contents. Ibid., 117-18. It is because of Romans’ 5-8 contents—ethical behavior toward and treatment of people of another ethnic group—that I embrace the majority perspective and see the subject matter of the group as social reconciliation.

¹²⁵ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul’s Theology*, 112-13.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 99.

have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in a newness of life.” (Rom. 6:4). This transitional statement connects salvific *and* social reconciliation in Romans.

In addressing this verse’s ethical response to Paul’s call for reconciliation in chapter 5 (Rom. 5:10-11), as (salvific) reconciliation stems from salvation and baptism, Ben Witherington describes Romans 6:4 by writing:

In v. 4, Paul indicates that through baptism the believer is buried with Christ ‘into death.’ Death is not seen here as an event, as we speak of the time of death, but rather as a state which one enters. Baptism throughout this segment is correlated with burial and death, not with resurrection and new life. Resurrection, including the resurrection of Jesus, is paired with the believer walking in newness of life. The reason for this is not hard to find. Paul believes that the Christian has yet to experience the resurrection, at which juncture there will be full conformity to the image of God’s Son. Having gone through the transformation which is symbolized by baptism, believers should walk in newness of life. So Paul believes that Christians are capable of ‘walking’ in a very different fashion than they have previously, ‘in newness of life,’ not merely that they ought to do so.¹²⁷

Accordingly, verse 4 takes reconciliation into the social realm. Constantineanu addresses the ethical *and* social implication of salvation by indicating, “Paul does not understand simply a vertical, legal transaction between God and people, but rather a process which necessarily involves a moral transformation in the lives of believers.”¹²⁸

Whereas salvific reconciliation places sinful humans in right relationship with God *through Jesus*, and social reconciliation requires that humans treat one another equally *because of Jesus*, Paul’s underlying argument in Romans 5-8 is that, because humans have been reconciled to God, baptism into the church imposes an ethical obligation to treat others as equals, regardless of their ethnic or socioeconomic status, by leading a new life. Indeed, looking at

¹²⁷ Ben Witherington (with Darlene Hyatt), *Paul’s Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), 158.

¹²⁸ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul’s Theology*, 124.

Romans 5 through 8, and recognizing the significance of Paul's previous use of the word reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11), Constantineanu offers:

Thus, one can say that Paul uses justification/reconciliation . . . to highlight not only the legal, vertical dimension of these concepts but also their communal, horizontal dimension. The language of reconciliation introduced in chapter 5 and continued for the rest of the letter is thus not used to point out the stance of the individual with God (as it has traditionally been understood), but also to indicate the believers' responsibility to extend this reconciliation to 'the other' in their own community and outside of it.¹²⁹

This argument is the very core of social reconciliation.

2. A Situational Overview of Paul's Letter to the Church at Rome

As previously referenced, each of Paul's undisputed letters deals with a specific situation.¹³⁰ Romans is no exception. Constantineanu writes, "the social, ethnic and cultural diversity in Rome, which resulted in a similar diversity in the house churches in Rome, led to different understandings and practices of the gospel, with different and even competing forms of leadership, and different stances vis-à-vis other believers and outsiders."¹³¹ These social relations—largely based on race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status—prompted Paul to write Romans.

In providing what is arguably Romans' thesis, Paul wrote, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'" (Rom. 1:16-17). One therefore discerns that Romans' central subject is God's grace in reestablishing his lordship over humanity, his

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 102.

¹³¹ Ibid.

rebellious creation.¹³² As Achtemeier makes clear, this central theme is based on faith, instead of ethnicity.

Faith, or trust (both translate the same Greek word) is the mode by which that lordship is accepted. The fact that the relationship of gracious lordship between Creator and creation is now based on faith, rather than on race (as it was in the case of the Jews as chosen people), means the relationship has now been universalized to extend beyond the bounds of the Jewish race.¹³³

Social reconciliation is therefore one of Romans' most important themes, as Paul develops it as an explication of the inner logic of God's gospel of righteousness and as an appropriate response to the ethnic disunity in Rome.¹³⁴

It is commonly understood that Paul wrote Romans, probably from Corinth around the mid-50s, to address a mixed audience of Jewish and Gentile believers.¹³⁵ Ethnic divisions, and Paul's attempt to bring various ethnicities into a reconciled relationship with one another, is one of the reasons he wrote Romans. Indeed, Charles Talbert opines, "A consensus seems to be building . . . that the main need in the Roman church addressed by Paul was that of resolving this disunity between Jews and Gentiles."¹³⁶ Constantineanu similarly offers, "Paul used the reconciliation language to bring about unity and mutual acceptance among the believers in Rome and . . . the rhetoric of reconciliation was important for the entire argument of Romans."¹³⁷ This argument is most certainly at the heart of chapters 5-8.

¹³² See, generally, Paul J. Achtemeier, *Romans* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 20.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹³⁴ See Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 104.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁶ Charles H. Talbert, *Romans: Smyth & Helwys Biblical Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Co., 2002), 12.

¹³⁷ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 99.

As previously highlighted, Paul's thinking was influenced by both his Jewish heritage and events in the Greco-Roman world.¹³⁸ Sociopolitical events in Rome most certainly led to the ethnic divisions he addressed in the letter. In this regard, Constantineanu chronicles:

That Christianity in Rome began around Jewish synagogues explains its initial Jewish pattern of thought and behavior. The increasing number of Christians from among the Jews gave rise to frequent disturbances and conflicts between Jewish Christians and the Jews, which contributed substantially to the expulsion of the Jews and Jewish Christians from Rome, through Claudius' edict, most probably around AD 49.¹³⁹

Moreover, in considering the ethnic consequences of Claudius' edict,¹⁴⁰ Constantineanu goes on to write, "The church(es) in Rome were thus left with a predominant and growing Gentile component, which for the purpose of self-preservation eventually made conscience efforts to distance themselves from the Jews."¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Furnish, *The Moral Teaching of Paul*, 66.

¹³⁹ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 101 (internal citations omitted).

¹⁴⁰ While chronicling various emperor-issued edicts that expelled various groups from Rome, Witherington writes of Claudius' edict of 49 as follows:

It was probably the leadership of the Jewish community that was expelled by Claudius' edict, and Acts 18.2 suggests this included Jewish Christian leaders such as Priscilla and Aquila. There is good reason for one to think that Paul is writing at a time when Jewish Christians, and in particular their leadership, are just beginning to reestablish themselves in Rome. They have been marginalized by the expulsion, and Paul is addressing a largely Gentile Christian audience in Rome which has drawn some erroneous conclusions about Jews and Jewish Christians.

Witherington, *Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 12. Further, in expounding on the presumed rationale for Claudius' edict, he also provides:

Claudius was particularly concerned in the Alexandrian difficulties that Jews not try to be Hellenes. Mixing of the cultures, with the suspicion of the population of Hellenistic or Greco-Roman culture by things Jewish, was the issue, and he would be alarmed if many Gentiles, perhaps even notable Gentiles, became adherents of Judaism or even Jewish Christianity.

Ibid., 12-13.

¹⁴¹ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 101.

In noting the edict's consequences, Peter Lampe writes that by the time Paul wrote Romans, "urban Roman Christianity can be seen as separated from the federation of Synagogues."¹⁴² Accordingly, "When the Jewish Christians began to return to Rome around the mid-50s, they found a completely new situation, with the Gentile Christians in leadership positions and a life marked by non-Jewish patterns of religious life as well as a diminished emphasis on key Jewish convictions and practices."¹⁴³ These were the fractured ethnic divisions Paul had to address.

To bring about social reconciliation between fractured groups, Constantineanu summarizes Paul's intent in Romans:

Thus, it is clear from the letter that one of the major problems confronting the Roman Christians had to do with their differences, dissensions, and even divisions among various groups (particularly—but not exclusively—among the Jewish and Gentile believers), vis-à-vis such issues as ethnicity, religious practice (observance of dietary rules, or days, and of Jewish laws), and relationships with others within and outside the Christian community.¹⁴⁴

He also goes on to argue, "This background explains Paul's interest in reconciliation, peace, love, unity, welcome—as he attempts not simply to put an end to any conflict and reconcile different groups but especially, to articulate so forcefully the inner logic of the gospel as being incompatible with such behavior."¹⁴⁵ Once again, Paul's ethical treatment of the Other and leading a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4), as a consequence of baptism into the church, is at the core of what I describe as social reconciliation.

¹⁴² Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 15-16.

¹⁴³ Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology*, 101-02 (internal citations omitted).

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 102-03.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 103 (internal citations omitted).

IV Applying Social Reconciliation's Threefold Criteria to Paul's Theology of Equality

In chapter 1, while connecting but simultaneously distinguishing between salvific and social reconciliation, I argued social reconciliation requires three things: (1) equal treatment of others; (2) forgiveness for previous transgressions; and (3) a recognition that forgiveness is a ministry left to the church. I now apply two of the three previously highlighted criteria to the biblical texts discussed herein. The third criterion, however, is a transitional point that begins the next chapter's emphasis on *civil reconciliation*, a specific type and/or subset of social reconciliation.

(A) Equal Treatment of Others

Each of the three selected texts emphasizes an egalitarian-like equal treatment of others. In Galatians 3, Paul provides what is arguably the New Testament's most pronounced point of equality and an equal treatment of others. With freedom as an undergirding basis for the letter, Paul promotes a freedom to love and accept others as one would want to be loved. Accordingly, in what may have been a baptismal liturgy, the Galatians pericope speaks to cultural, racial, and gender equality, because of Jesus. Similarly, the First Corinthians pericope calls for equal treatment of others, regardless of social economic standing or class. Further, the section from Romans is anchored in salvific reconciliation (Rom. 5:10-11), and turns to equal treatment of others—based largely on racial, ethnic and socioeconomic dynamics—after emphasizing an ethically-imposed social response because of baptism (Rom. 6:4).

(B) Forgiveness for Previous Transgressions

Although not an expressed focus, forgiveness for previous transgressions is unquestionably implied in all three texts. In Galatians, for example, forgiveness for previous sins is implied, from a two-fold perspective. From a salvific perspective (from a gender perspective,

at least), “Paul assures the Galatians in verse 26 that through the faith of Jesus Christ they are all children of God . . . inasmuch as all have the full rights that only male heirs received in that context.”¹⁴⁶ From a social perspective, as Paul emphasizes equitable treatment of others, “clothing” oneself with Christ (Gal 3:27) implies forgiving others, as we “wear the garb of forgiveness and new life that Christ embodies for us.”¹⁴⁷ Indeed, “reconciling involves the complementary dynamics of repenting *and* forgiving, the first a way of dealing with having done wrong, the second with having suffered wrong. Thus reconciliation is achieved when perpetrators have repented and victims have forgiven.”¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, Galatians implicitly calls for both repenting *and* forgiveness because of its emphasis on equitable treatment and wholistic communal relations.

The pericope from First Corinthians also implies forgiveness (and repentance) because it envisions an ongoing and interactive relationship among people of various socioeconomic backgrounds meeting together, in a non-liturgical setting, for a common meal. Interaction and sharing in such a space are only possible if forgiveness is given and received. Moreover, the ethical implications of baptism, as emphasized in Romans, again requires forgiveness and repentance. Moving toward reconciliation, after such ethnic and cultural fracturing, inherently requires forgiveness.

V Conclusion

In this second chapter, I have outlined Paul’s background and experiences as a basis for understanding his theology. Further, in specifically looking at Paul’s theology of equality in the

¹⁴⁶ Bedford, *Galatians*, 91.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 92 (internal citations omitted).

¹⁴⁸ Joseph Liechty, “Putting Forgiveness in its Place: The Dynamics of Reconciliation,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology* (David Tombs & Joseph Liechty, eds.)(Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 60 (emphasis added).

Greco-Roman world, I used portions of three authentic epistles to show that, in writing to address three specific situations and on three separate occasions, Paul emphasized social equality among various groups, the basis of social reconciliation.

I concluded this chapter by returning to the three elements I addressed in the previous chapter as being necessary for social reconciliation. I specifically addressed the first two as being present in all three of the selected biblical texts. With respect to the third, however, it serves as a basis for *civil reconciliation*, a particular type of social reconciliation that is the focal point of the next chapter. I now contextualize Paul's theology of equality, as a ministry left to the church, overlooking the reconciliatory efforts of clergy and laity during the Civil Rights Movement.

Chapter 3: Civil Reconciliation: Contextualizing King and the Church's Ministry of Reconciliation

As the hour for the evening meeting arrived, I approached the doors of the church with some apprehension, wondering how many of the leaders would respond to our call . . . More than forty people, from every segment of Negro life, were crowded into the large church meeting room. I saw physicians, schoolteachers, lawyers, businessmen, postal workers, union leaders, and clergymen. Virtually every organization of the Negro community was represented.

The largest number there was from the Christian ministry. Having left so many civic meetings in the past sadly disappointed by the dearth of ministers participating, I was filled with joy when I entered the church and found so many of them there; for then I knew that something unusual was about to happen.¹⁴⁹

I **Introductory Overview: Civil Reconciliation Stems From Social Reconciliation**

In the previous chapter, I explored social reconciliation in the Pauline Corpus by overviewing Paul's theology of equality in response to specific situations prompting him to write portions of Galatians, First Corinthians, and Romans. As part of a scriptural exploration, the previous chapter concluded by pairing three specific criteria for social reconciliation with the respective scriptures, arguing that social reconciliation requires: (1) equal treatment of others; (2) forgiveness for previous transgressions; and (3) a recognition that forgiveness is a ministry left to the church.

In beginning this chapter, I argue that inasmuch as forgiveness is a ministry left to the church, *civil reconciliation*—a specific type of social reconciliation—is a ministry encompassing forgiveness, as the church interfaces with the secular world. Further, insofar as reconciliation is ongoing, especially as clergy leaders engage in secular politics within the prophetic domain of ministry,¹⁵⁰ the divisive issues moving the contemporary church to reconciling action are similar

¹⁴⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001; previously published by HarperCollins, 1958), 49.

¹⁵⁰ My reference to the prophetic domain relates to the *munus triplex* doctrine, speaking to ecclesial leadership and noting the priestly, prophetic, and royal/kingly domains, or offices in which members of the clergy serve. See, e.g.,

to the issues that moved her to engage in civil reconciliation, addressing secular politics during the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁵¹ Forgiveness is still a critical part of the conversation.

The division between Christians (and ecclesial bodies) engaging in or staying out of secular politics is well documented.¹⁵² History, however, suggests it is not surprising the black church,¹⁵³ under Martin Luther King, Jr.’s leadership, led the church universal’s political entry into the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁵⁴ Amy Black writes:

Dan B. Allender, “Three Leaders You Can’t Do Without: Why You Need a Prophet, a Priest, and a King,” in *Leading With a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2006), 185-99. Inasmuch as different leaders excel in different combinations of the threefold office, “prophetic leadership” is often associated with the liberative role of challenging systems, as popularized during the Civil Rights Movement.

¹⁵¹ In previous scholarship, I argued the Civil Rights Movement’s most quantifiable measure of success was passage of the Voting Right Act of 1965. See, generally, Jonathan C. Augustine, “The Theology of Civil Disobedience: The First Amendment, Freedom Riders, and Passage of the Voting Rights Act,” *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, 2012, Vol. 21, no. 2:255-300. In quantifiably documenting its significance, David Garrow highlights that in less than one month, more than 60,000 African Americans were added to the voter rolls in just four states, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Mississippi. David J. Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), 181-82. Further, Garrow also writes, “the Voting Rights Act was being called ‘the most successful piece of civil rights legislation ever enacted,’ by [Nicholas Katzenbach] a former attorney general and ‘one of the most important legislative enactments of all time,’ by [the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburg] . . . [president emeritus of the University of Notre Dame and former] chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.” *Ibid.*, xi.

¹⁵² An excellent historical exploration, written from a Christian ethicist’s perspective, of whether Christians are called to be engaged in or refrain from political activity, is woven throughout H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (50th anniversary edition) (New York: HarperOne, 2001 [1951]). As an example of this tension, in documenting Lutheran’s traditional reticence for political affairs in the United States and Germany, Robert Benne writes, “during the time of the Civil War in the United States, Lutherans split according to the governments they lived under. Northern and Southern Lutherans didn’t unite until 1918. But, even more disturbing Lutheranism remained quiescent—except for a few heroic souls such as Bonhoeffer—amidst the rise of Nazism in Germany.” Robert Benne, “The Lutheran (Paradoxical) View,” in *Five Views on The Church and Politics*, eds. Amy E. Black & Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2015), 62. Further, with respect to the ongoing conflict within black church communities, Raphael Warnock chronicles a tension between pietistic and liberationist strands that was arguably best illustrated by the initial resistance to King’s liberationist theology during the Civil Rights Movement. Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety & Public Witness* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 53-61. This tension continues, within a growing trend of conservative, non-emancipatory black churches that do not identify as “political churches.” Roger Baumann, “Political Engagement Meets the Prosperity Gospel: African American Christian Zionism and Black Church Politics,” *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 2016, Vol. 77, no. 4:359-385; see also C. Eric Lincoln & Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1990), 212-13.

¹⁵³ I draw a distinction between classic evangelical theology and black theology, in attempting to identify and define “the black church.” This distinction is also necessary to note a historic and ongoing conflict existing within the black church’s realm. As an initial matter, “the black church” includes members and congregations affiliated with the seven independent, historic, and African American-governed denominations founded after the Free African Society

The goal of the Black church in politics—and the rest of life—is the relentless pursuit of liberation, justice, and reconciliation. The tradition has a mixed view of the role of government. On the one hand, it emphasizes the positive role that government can play in serving justice, seeking the good of all people, and promoting reform and reconciliation. At the same time, the Black church is acutely aware that power can be a means of oppression, because her people have faced it firsthand.¹⁵⁵

Accordingly, with a focus on King’s leadership, I argue there is a sociopolitical parallel between the black church’s historic entry into the political affairs of the Civil Rights Movement and contemporary ecclesial bodies’ response to the “Make America Great Again” political narrative,¹⁵⁶ connected by the common thread of forgiveness.

of 1787. Specifically, the denominations include the: (1) African Methodist Episcopal Church; (2) African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church; (3) Christian Methodist Episcopal Church; (4) National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated; (5) National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated; (6) Progressive National Baptist Convention; and (7) Church of God in Christ. See Vaughn E. James, “The African-American Church, Political Activity, and Tax Exemption,” *Seton Hall Law Review*, 2007, Vol. 37, no. 2:371-412; see also Lincoln & Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 1. As Warnock argues, however, “such a limited designation is too narrow, given the current reality of black Christianity and given the development of independent black reflection (black theology) among black people and black causes in predominately white denominations.” Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 9. I agree and adopt Warnock’s more contemporary and inclusive reference, defining the black church as “the varied ecclesial groupings of Christians of African descent, inside and outside black and white denominations, imbued with the memory of a suffering Jesus and informed by the legacy of slavery and segregation in America.” *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Anthony Pinn writes, “By all accounts, the civil rights movement begins with the Montgomery (Alabama) Bus Boycott of 1955-56.” Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 13. Further, in addressing the political nature of the black church’s leadership, Pinn also argues:

It was not until the civil rights movement that there developed a persistent and collective cooperation on national issues of injustice and discrimination. Through participation in this push for social transformation and political change, black leaders and their churches came full circle. And, in addition to providing bodies willing to participate in direct action, disseminate information, and finance political activities, the Black Church also provided the ideological and theological underpinning for the movement.

Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Amy E. Black, “Introduction: Christian Traditions and Political Engagement,” in *Five Views on The Church and Politics*, ed. Amy E. Black & Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 2015), 13.

¹⁵⁶ Although the Make America Great Again political narrative has a life of its own, it is widely associated with Donald Trump’s divisive but successful 2016 presidential campaign. The African Methodist Episcopal Church, the oldest of the black church’s ecclesial bodies, has been at the forefront of opposing the Trump administration in multiple policy matters, including its attempts to repeal the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, popularly known as either “the ACA” or “Obama Care,” as well as the administration’s immigration reform policy of separating Mexican children from their families and former Attorney General Jeff Sessions’ attempted

In comparing church political activism during the Civil Rights Movement with a resurgence of the same today, both timeframes evidence issues necessitating the church respond to repressive governmental politics. I argue such prophetic responses are examples of civil reconciliation, where forgiveness is a necessary element. Insofar as King's leadership was largely centered around racial reconciliation—a need that most certainly still exists in both Christian and secular communities—*civil reconciliation* is larger than ethnic divisions. By exploring King's leadership, this chapter shows how the black church exemplified the ministry of forgiveness through civil reconciliation, connecting it with secular politics as an embodiment of Paul's theology of equality.¹⁵⁷

This chapter is divided into four (4) parts. It also begins with the end in mind (*telos*), arguing that forgiveness is a critical element of reconciliation, before discussing King's leadership, in the black church, as an exemplar of civil reconciliation. This chapter also briefly examines the black church's historical tension between pietistic theology and political activism, while also overviewing the theology King embraced in undergirding the Civil Rights Movement.

justification of the same, citing portions of Romans 13, the same biblical scripture used to justify the enslavement of African Americans in the antebellum South. See, generally, Religion News Service Press Release, "African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Council of Bishops Responds to American Healthcare Act," (March 21, 2017), <https://religionnews.com/2017/03/21/african-methodist-episcopal-ame-church-council-of-bishops-responds-to-american-healthcare-act>; Council of Bishops Statement, "AME Church Condemns Use of Scripture by Attorney General Sessions to Separate Immigrant Families," (Jun. 15, 2018), <https://www.ame-church.com/news/cob-statement-re-condemning-immigrant-family-separation>; see also See, e.g., Julia Jacobs, "Sessions's Use of Bible Passage to Defend Immigration Policy Draws Fire," *The New York Times* (Jun. 15, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/us/sessions-bible-verse-romans.html>. John Howard Yoder also addressed the evolving ethical responses to Romans 13:1-7 among faith adherents. See, generally, John Howard Yoder, "Let Every Soul Be Subject: Romans 13 and the Authority of the State," *The Politics of Jesus* (2d. ed)(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub.,1994)[1972], 193-210.

¹⁵⁷ In a similar vein, reconciliation can be contextualized from an empathic, Christocentric perspective as, "exchanging places with 'the other,' overcoming alienation through identification, solidarity, restoring relationships, positive change, new frameworks, and a rich togetherness that is both spiritual and political." Allan Aubrey Boesak & Curtis Paul DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2012), 12.

(A) What Does Civil Reconciliation Look Like?

In describing reconciliation, Richard Lischer writes, “Reconciliation looks different in innumerable contexts—different in South Africa than in the United States, different in inter-Christian dialogue than in Christian-Muslim dialogue, different at a conference table than at a kitchen table.”¹⁵⁸ In arguing that the church’s role in reconciliation includes society-at-large, I build on the contextualization of Paul’s theology of equality by examining the black church and its political activism, as popularized by King. In therefore following Lischer’s logic, civil reconciliation looks like the church entering the secular realm, while simultaneously engaging in a ministry of forgiveness.

As a scriptural point of reference, to address forgiveness in the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to the church, Second Corinthians provides:

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

In reflecting on this pericope, Greg Jones writes, “If we take Scripture seriously, Christians have to acknowledge that we are not only a forgiven people called to forgive one another; we have also been entrusted with the message of God’s forgiveness and reconciliation for the whole world.”¹⁵⁹ In other words, because God forgave human transgressions *through Jesus*, humans are likewise entrusted with a ministry of reconciliation *because of Jesus* and are called to forgive one another.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Lischer, *The End of Words: The Language of Reconciliation in a Culture of Violence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 134.

¹⁵⁹ L. Gregory Jones & Celestin Musekura, *Forgiving as We’ve Been Forgiven: Community Practices for Making Peace* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2010), 38.

Lischer posits that “God’s work of reconciliation is acknowledged when each person accepts God’s forgiveness in Jesus Christ and embraces the fullness of his or her humanity.”¹⁶⁰

He also writes:

Thanks to Paul, our faith is conditioned by the expectation of reunion, that of Jews *and* Gentiles. The Lord came, says Paul in Ephesians, preaching peace to the Gentiles afar off and to the Jews close at hand. Christians now see the world through the lens of a broken wall and the eschatological reality of *one new human race* (Ephesians 2)...Reconciliation is not a theological option, a specialized ministry, or the subject of an occasional sermon.¹⁶¹

In following Lischer’s logic, humans are reconciled to God *because of Jesus* and also eschatologically reconciled with one another. That recognition calls humanity to the ministry of reconciliation in the present age.

(B) Defining Reconciliation with a Christocentric Focus

In adopting a working definition of reconciliation, and providing parameters for my discussion of *civil reconciliation*, in particular, I agree, “reconciliation is as an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God’s original intention for all creation to flourish.”¹⁶² Indeed, as Jones also writes in a closely connected vein,

If we are to embody forgiveness in our time, we must first name the double temptation of cheap forgiveness and costly despair. The challenges of forgiveness will not be made easier by ignoring the obstacles that are particular to our age. And yet, at the same time, we must remember that God’s people have been challenged by forgiveness in every generation. Augustine noted in a sermon in the fifth century that when his parishioners heard they were to pray for their enemies, they said they would—they would pray for them to die.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Lischer, *The End of Words*, 137.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 138–39 (emphasis added).

¹⁶² Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press Books, 2015), 22.

¹⁶³ Jones & Musekura, *Forgiving as We’ve Been Forgiven*, 43 (internal citations omitted).

This chapter explores forgiveness in the twenty-first century's era of Trump, after establishing a foundation of contextualized racial animus in the Civil Rights Movement.

After this introductory overview, Part Two contextualizes civil reconciliation. I begin by discussing the dynamic of forgiveness, as it relates to reconciliation, before overviewing the black church's engagement in secular politics. This discussion examines King's ministry as an exemplar of civil reconciliation. I also argue that insofar as the Civil Rights Movement was successful in achieving civil reconciliation and producing, among other things, the Voting Rights Acts of 1965, the legislation became one of America's most divisive social measures. Empirical studies show the Voting Rights Act brought "King's Dream" to fruition, with African Americans elected to political office in unprecedented measures.¹⁶⁴ The same legislation also sparked a post-Civil Rights Movement white nationalist retaliation that was galvanized during the Obama Administration, contributing to Trump's November 2016 election.

With the presumption that the Civil Rights Movement was successful, Part Three revisits the ministry of forgiveness, as overviewed in this introduction and consistently exemplified by marginalized groups. In looking at two timeframes, the Civil Rights Movement and the era of Trump, I explore King's theology of forgiveness (a biblically-mandated love of enemies), as well as the very public forgiveness at least one victim gave in response to the June 2015 racially-motivated massacre at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina.¹⁶⁵ Both responses, love of enemies and "biblical forgiveness," are arguably predicated on a theology rooted in Jesus's Sermon on the Mount.

¹⁶⁴ Augustine, "The Theology of Civil Disobedience," 295-96.

¹⁶⁵ Anthony B. Thompson (with Denise George), *Called to Forgive: The Charleston Church Shooting, a Victim's Husband, and the Path to Healing and Peace* (Minneapolis: BethanyHouse, 2019). On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof opened fire after a Bible study, killing nine people. See generally, Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti & Ashley

Finally, this chapter concludes with Part Four, a synthesis of the salient points addressed herein, as a transition to the following chapter's discussion of the Voting Rights Act and affirmative action. Inasmuch as "every action has a reaction," although those measures were successful in creating civil reconciliation, they also led to great divisions, necessitating a call for reconciliation. Accordingly, this chapter's conclusion sets a foundation for exploring the white nationalistic counternarrative that ultimately led to the politically popularized "Make America Great Again."

II Contextualizing Civil Reconciliation

(A) The Importance of Forgiveness: A Theological Perspective

Insofar as forgiveness is a part of the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to the church (2 Cor. 5:17-19), Jones connects forgiveness and reconciliation from a Christological perspective, helping define the functionality of the church's work in social relationships. In *Embodying Forgiveness*, Jones writes:

[A] Christian account of forgiveness ought not simply or even primarily be focused on the absolution of guilt; rather, it ought to be focused on reconciliation of brokenness, the restoration of communion—with God, with God, with one another, and with the whole Creation. Indeed, because of the pervasiveness of sin and evil, Christian forgiveness must be at once an expression of a commitment to a new way of life . . .

[T]he craft of forgiveness involves the ongoing and ever-deepening process of unlearning sin through forgiveness, and learning, through specific habits and practices, to live in communion—with the Triune God, with one another, and with the whole Creation. This priority of forgiveness is a sign of the peace of God's original Creation as well as the promised consummation of that Creation in God's Kingdom, and also a sign of the costliness by which such forgiveness is achieved.

Southall, "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston," *The New York Times* (Jun. 17, 2015), <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html>. Thompson provides, "After Dylann's April 2017 trial and federal death sentence, the unrepentant young white supremacist [became] the first person in United States history to be convicted of a federal hate crime and sentenced to the death penalty." Thompson, *Called to Forgive*, 143.

In this sense, then, forgiveness indicates the ongoing priority of the church's task to offer the endlessly creative and gratuitous gift of new life in the face of (often horrifying) sin and evil.¹⁶⁶

His analysis is arguably the very embodiment of the previously cited Second Corinthians pericope. Indeed, as Desmond Tutu similarly writes, "Christian reconciliation *is* radical reconciliation. Without it, our processes and practices of reconciliation cannot avoid the temptation (or the trap, if you will) of cheap grace, on the one hand, and political expediency, on the other . . ." ¹⁶⁷

Further, in admittedly writing as a Wesleyan in defining features of the practice of reconciling forgiveness, Jones also argues,

the practice of reconciling forgiveness calls us to unlearn the language that confuses, dominates, and controls and learn the 'redemptive language' that enables us to sustain community. Issues of forgiveness and reconciliation invariably involve issues of power; but, if we approach them in the context of forgiven lives and redemptive speech, we can struggle toward deploying the power of Christ's cross and resurrection rather than powers of domination. Cruciform power does not destroy, but seeks to reconcile and make new.¹⁶⁸

In therefore progressively moving toward the contextualization of civil reconciliation, with King's leadership in the black church as an exemplar, the question must become, "What does a Cruciform power with redemptive language that sustains community look like?"

Forgiveness can be a difficult practice, especially in certain imbalanced relationships.¹⁶⁹

A Christocentric perspective, however, acknowledges that "We are called to love our enemies,

¹⁶⁶ L. Gregory Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness: A Theological Analysis* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1995), xii.

¹⁶⁷ Desmond Mpilo Tutu, "Foreword," Boesak & DeYoung, vii.

¹⁶⁸ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 190.

¹⁶⁹ Lischer writes that "forgiveness is, or should be, a stepping-stone toward reconciliation by which two people or groups are enabled to live together in peace. Reconciliation is the final destination of alienated people or groups who have freely offered and received forgiveness. Therefore, it cannot be imposed by the stronger of the two sides." Lischer, *The End of Words*, 149. An example of this would be the imbalanced relationship between Afrikaners and

seeking to make them friends. Hence the Church must maintain its distinctive practices of forgiveness . . . In doing so, the Church witnesses through its practices to the truth of the Spirit who is making all things new.”¹⁷⁰ This “newness,” as the consequence of forgiveness, is a ministry left to the church. I argue it was also popularized by King, in the black church, as a civil reconciliation exemplar.

(B) Contextualizing Civil Reconciliation: The Black Church’s Entry into the Secular Politics of the Civil Rights Movement

There are different theories as to what event launched the Civil Rights Movement. In scholarship written from a legal perspective, I previously argued it emanated from the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).¹⁷¹ In more recent scholarship, however, written from an ecclesial leadership perspective, I argue the December 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks—a very active member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Montgomery,

Bantus in the post-apartheid South Africa. In *No Future Without Forgiveness*, Archbishop Desmond Tutu writes about the importance of forgiveness, after institutionalization of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, while also emphasizing the need for justice. In distinguishing between *retributive* and *restorative* justice, Tutu writes:

One might go on to say that perhaps justice fails to be done only if the concept we entertain of justice is retributive justice, whose chief goal is to be punitive . . . We content there is another kind of justice, restorative justice, which was characteristic of traditional African jurisprudence. Here, the central concern is not retribution or punishment . . . [T]he central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense . . . Thus we would claim that justice, restorative justice, is being served when efforts are being made to work for healing, for forgiving, and for reconciliation.

Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday Books, 1997), 54-55.

¹⁷⁰ Jones, *Embodying Forgiveness*, 203-04.

¹⁷¹ See Jonathan C. Augustine, “The Interest Convergence of Education Reform and Economic Development: A Response to ‘The State of Our Unions,’” *University of Louisville Law Review*, 2013, Vol. 51, no. 2:407-418.

Alabama—and the subsequent Montgomery Bus Boycott, gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁷² In connecting these perspectives, Lincoln and Mamiya write:

The case which came to symbolize a decisive break with the past began when Rev. Oliver Leon Brown of the St. Mark's A.M.E. Church in Topeka, Kansas—supported by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund—sued the Board of Education on behalf of his nine-year-old daughter Linda Brown and all other black children similarly injured by segregation in the public schools. The resultant Supreme Court decision granting the relief requested set in motion the civil rights movement which reached its zenith under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., with reverberations around the world. It was Dr. King who led the year-long Montgomery bus boycott, begun in December 1955, and which culminated in a decisive defeat of segregation in the public transportation system of that one-time capital of the Confederacy.¹⁷³

Regardless, however, of exactly when the Civil Rights Movement began, it is certain the Montgomery Bus Boycott introduced the world to King, then-pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church ("Dexter Avenue").¹⁷⁴

My intent is not to excessively elaborate on King's background. Volumes have been dedicated to chronicling his life. I instead rely primarily on Richard Lischer's *The Preacher King*,¹⁷⁵ and Peter Paris's *Black Religious Leaders*,¹⁷⁶ to briefly highlight King's academic

¹⁷² See Jonathan C. Augustine, "The Fiery Furnace Civil Disobedience and the Civil Rights Movement: A Biblical Exegesis on Daniel 3 and Letter From Birmingham Jail," *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, 2018. Vol. 21, no. 3:243-262; see also Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 13 ("With Rosa Parks's arrest . . . a boycott was called for and the Baptist Ministerial Alliance in Montgomery responded by becoming part of . . . the Montgomery Improvement Association . . . [T]he work of this organization . . . grew into a movement for civil rights across the United States.").

¹⁷³ Lincoln & Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 211.

¹⁷⁴ As a foundational matter, it bears noting that the Montgomery Bus Boycott was not the first boycott of its kind. The Reverend T.J. Jemison, then-pastor of Mt. Zion First Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, led a similar boycott in 1953 when blacks boycotted city buses as a means of leveraging economic pressure, demanding an end to Jim Crow segregation in public accommodation. See Adam Faircloth, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1987), 11-12.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr and the Word That Moved America* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).

¹⁷⁶ Peter J. Paris, *Black Religious Leaders: Conflict in Unity* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).

influences and early ministry. This foundation leads to an understanding of the black church's entry into the work of civil reconciliation. King's background is important insofar as his Montgomery pastorate served as the crucible for where a biblically-influenced social ethic of egalitarianism met Jim Crow discrimination in the South.¹⁷⁷

Lischer describes the Montgomery Bus Boycott in setting the course for the black church's political engagement, while chronicling King's 1954 arrival in Montgomery and installation as pastor of Dexter Avenue.¹⁷⁸ He notably describes the Boycott's beginning, detailing King's election as president of the hastily formed Montgomery Improvement Association,¹⁷⁹ King's powerful oration at Holt Street Baptist Church—just over a year after his pastoral installation at Dexter Avenue—and the synthesis of ideas King brought together, as history was set in motion.¹⁸⁰

In describing King's preaching and the black church's entry into politics, Lischer opines:

By means of a wealth of literary, biblical, and philosophical allusions, [King] assured his hearers that history and universal moral law are aligned with the black quest for freedom. He wanted his potentially sympathetic white audiences to recognize the best of their own religious and political values in the mirror of his message. Like a priest, he mediated a covenant with which white moderates and liberals were comfortable . . . He reinforced this commonality in many ways—with psychological jargon, popular religious

¹⁷⁷ Lischer also writes of King's academic preparation. After Benjamin Mays's foundational influence at Morehouse College, King was exposed to leading liberal Western theologies at Crozer Theological Seminary and Boston University. He was academically prepared through encounters with Rauschenbusch's Social Gospel, Niebuhr's Christian Realism, and DeWolf's (Boston) Personalism. See, *ibid.*, 54-60. This academic exposure, along with King's lived experiences in the black church, molded his leadership in the Civil Rights Movement.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 73-76.

¹⁷⁹ In describing his December 1955 election as president of the newly formed Montgomery Improvement Association, King candidly details that things happened so quickly, he didn't have time to consider his nomination and election. Moreover, King writes that if he had considered it, in light of the time needed for a new pastor to serve his congregation, King probably would have declined the nomination. See King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 56.

¹⁸⁰ Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 85-89.

sentiment, the grammar of inclusion, and by a synthesis of biblical and civil-religious rhetoric.¹⁸¹

Accordingly, as the Civil Rights Movement began, King's preaching became political and the black church entered secular politics, institutionally beginning the work of civil reconciliation.

King addressed the issue of race in political oratory, likening the struggle of blacks in the Jim Crow South with the struggle of oppressed Jews in the Old Testament,¹⁸² while also making a rhetorical transition that brought the black church into political engagement.

After the Boycott had commenced, King's Sunday morning sermons found a new purpose and vitality. The specificity of *race*, which he had assiduously avoided in his graduate education, now sharpened the point of his biblical interpretation and preaching. No one sermon captured the transformation that was taking place in him, but his first major rhetorical triumph, the address to the massed protestors at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery, left him changed utterly.¹⁸³

Indeed, King's transformative oratory at Holt Street Baptist Church reminded America of the words of the prophet Amos, who similarly challenged governmental action, twenty-eight centuries earlier. "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24). King's leadership, and the black church's politicization, exemplified civil reconciliation.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁸² Ibid., 83-84.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 85 (emphasis in original).

(C) Piety or Politics: The Black Church was Divided as to Whether it Should Play a Role in Civil Reconciliation

1. The Politics of Protest or African American Acquiescence?

In the wake of the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott, King epitomized civil reconciliation by arguing the church must be engaged, not just in spiritual matters, but with sociopolitical issues, too. In his first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, King wrote:

But a religion true to its nature must also be concerned about man's social conditions. Religion deals with both earth and heaven, both time and eternity. Religion operates not only on the vertical plane but also on the horizontal. It seeks not only to integrate men with God but to integrate men with men and each man with himself. This means, at bottom that the Christian gospel is a two-way road. On the one hand, it seeks to change the souls of men, and thereby unite them with God; on the other hand, it seeks to change the environmental conditions of men so that the soul will have a chance after it is changed. Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion.¹⁸⁴

Having been reared in the social milieu of politically black clergy and studying influential figures like Walter Rauschenbusch, King's work in synthesizing the gospel's concern for souls *and* society was crystalized in the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁸⁵ King's work of the church taking on the secular world was the epitome of civil reconciliation.

¹⁸⁴ King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 36.

¹⁸⁵ King credited his studies of Rauschenbusch as a foundational basis for his social views. In particular, while detailing his seminary studies, King wrote,

Not until I entered Crozer Theological Seminary in 1948, however, did I begin a serious intellectual quest for a method to eliminate social evil. Although my major interest was in the fields of theology and philosophy, I spent a great deal of time reading the works of the great social philosophers. I came early to the Walter Rauschenbusch's *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, which left an indelible imprint on my thinking by giving me a theological basis for the social concern which had already grown up in me as a result of my experiences . . . It has been my conviction ever since reading Rauschenbusch that any religion which professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul, is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried.

Warnock highlights that the forgoing quote from *Stride Toward Freedom* was a common rhetorical thread interwoven throughout his writings and oratory.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, King's social gospel influence sought civil reconciliation through the black church's political engagement of the secular world.

The preacher must be concerned about the whole man. Not merely his soul, but his body. It's alright to talk about heaven. I talk about it because I believe firmly in immortality. But you've got to talk about the earth. It's alright to talk about long white robes over yonder, but I want a suit and some shoes to wear down here. It's alright to talk about the streets flowing with milk and honey in heaven., but I want some food to eat down here. It's even alright to talk about the new Jerusalem. But one day we must talk about the new Chicago, the new Atlanta, the new New York, the new America. And any religion that professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the slums that cripple the souls—the economic conditions that stagnate the soul and the city governments that may damn the soul—is a dry, dead do-nothing religion in need of new blood.¹⁸⁷

This “applied theology,” moving religious convictions into social action, has been called “evangelical liberalism.”¹⁸⁸ Insofar as it moves the church toward political action, it is arguably the essence of civil reconciliation.

King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 91; see also Michael Dwayne Blackwell, “In the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.: The Social Gospel of Faye Wattleton and Marian Wright Edleman,” *Gender and the Social Gospel*, Wendy J. Deichmann Edwards & Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 217.

¹⁸⁶ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 43.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. (citing Martin Luther King, Jr., “Why Jesus Called a Man a Fool,” in *A Knock at Midnight: Inspiration From the Great Sermons of Martin King, Jr.*, Clayborne Carson & Peter Holloran, eds. (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 141-42.

¹⁸⁸ In describing evangelical liberalism, Anthony Cook writes as follows:

Evangelical liberalism posited the goodness of human nature, as reflected in and resulting from human moral reasoning, and it conjectured that evil institutions had limited people's efforts to pursue the ideal of the Kingdom of Value, what King would call the ‘Beloved Community.’

Evangelical liberalism, from its theory of human nature, deduced a new role for the Church and for Christians. Given intrinsic human goodness, social institutions could and should be transformed to reflect more accurately the ideals of universal kinship and cooperation. An infallible scripture reflecting the static will of God could not justify social institutions like slavery and segregation

The philosophy of evangelical liberalism is the exact opposite of conservative evangelicalism.¹⁸⁹ In the black church community, conservative evangelicalism was exhibited by conservative leaders, like Joseph H. Jackson, the longest serving president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. Jackson was a great patriot who believed in the goodness of America,¹⁹⁰ even arguing, “the supreme law of the land, appropriately amended by due process, holds out a promise to Blacks to that gradually has been honored and that will be more completely fulfilled in due time.”¹⁹¹

In further noting Jackson’s opposition to modes of black religious protest, Paris documents Jackson’s leadership philosophy by writing:

In the event that any state or group withholds those rights and privileges, the citizens have recourse to the supreme law through the courts. And that mode of

Anthony E. Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies: The Reconstructive Theology of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Neil Gotanda, et al, eds. (New York: The New Press, 1995), 95.

¹⁸⁹ Conservative evangelicalism can be described as an eclectic blend of Calvinist dogma and the spiritualism of the eighteenth-century Great Awakening. Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies,” 102. In further describing conservative evangelicalism’s social influence through slavery and later adoption by Southern Evangelical Christians, Cook also writes:

The conservative evangelicalism of slave society was premised on five basic assumptions. The first was the fallen nature of human beings, the pervasiveness of human depravity and sin. The second was contrition, a period of mourning characterized by feelings of personal guilt and sorry for sins. The third was conversion, an intensely personal experience with God in which the burdens of sin are lifted and the soul cleansed and made fit for the Kingdom of God. The fourth was the separation of believers, the sometimes physical but most times psychological separation of the community of believers from sinful worldly concerns and pursuits. And the last was the separation of church and state, the extreme deference to the existing social order and the dependence on the state for the laws and rules necessary to constrain the sinful nature of earthly beings.

These features of conservative evangelism were considered rooted in an infallible scripture representing the untainted word of God; they legitimated slave masters’ authority in several ways .

...

Ibid., 91.

¹⁹⁰ Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 94-97.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 76.

action was strongly advocated by Jackson, since, as he saw it, the only alternative was that of individuals or groups, ‘taking the law into their own hands,’ and this setting the stage for anarchy/mob rule . . . Jackson expended considerable energy during the ‘60s in admonishing civil rights workers not to employ similar methods. Rather, he preached that every citizen should have faith in the legal machinery of the nation and in the justice set forth so prominently in the federal Constitution.¹⁹²

Jackson’s philosophy on black church leadership was indeed antithetical to King’s. Moreover, it was also presumed a reason for the famous 1961 split in the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., where King and other anti-Jackson forces staged a march-in at the convention.¹⁹³ Jackson’s leadership represented a non-emancipatory, black church faction that exemplified conservative evangelicalism and was clearly more interested in piety than protest politics.

The opposite is true of evangelical liberalism. Warnock highlights the black church’s liberationist nature and King’s leadership in bringing her squarely into secular affairs,¹⁹⁴ by arguing:

‘the saving of souls,’ while ignoring or marginalizing the transformation of the social order as central to the soteriological message of the biblical witness and the essential mission of the church is clearly *inconsistent* with any doctrine of the church that can be derived from the radical side of the black church’s witness.

¹⁹² Ibid., 76-77. In further describing Jackson’s religious patriotism, Paris also writes,

He argued impressively that the nation’s problems could be solved by the moral force of the Constitution, the just laws of the land, the American philosophy of freedom, and the goodwill of the citizenry. He expressed faith in the legislators and spoke against various types of mass pressures and techniques aimed at informing the legislators of their patriotic duty.

Ibid, 86.

¹⁹³ See *ibid.*, 92.

¹⁹⁴ In describing King’s theological influences, as well as his ability to attack conservative evangelicalism, Cook writes,

The evangelicalism of Dr. George Washington Davis, King’s professor of theology at Crozer Seminary, and the social gospel of Walter Rauschenbusch, gave King the theological perspectives to challenge conservative evangelicalism’s conception of human nature and its debilitating dichotomy between the spiritual and the secular, as well as between order and freedom.

Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies,” 95.

The liberationist thrust of black religion can be traced from slave religion to the freedom thrust of the independent black church movement to the ministry of Martin Luther King, Jr. The leader of the church-led movement for liberation, King and his SCLC challenged any narrow and individualistic understanding of the church's mission that focuses exclusively on 'saving souls.' Rather, King and those who served with him set out to 'Redeem the Soul of America.'¹⁹⁵

Indeed, although King's prophetic leadership formally brought the black church, as an institution, into secular political affairs, the black church was actually birthed in the politics of resistance and has always been engaged in political affairs.¹⁹⁶

2. Civil Reconciliation Through the Resistance of Civil Disobedience

Almost ten years after writing *Stride Toward Freedom*, King responded to the well-documented history of ecclesial leaders' rebuke of the church's engagement in secular politics. In 1963, after an act of civil disobedience leading to his arrest in Birmingham, King famously wrote *Letter From Birmingham Jail* to squarely address fellow members of the clergy who criticized him for bringing the church into secular affairs.¹⁹⁷ King famously wrote:

¹⁹⁵ Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church*, 137 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹⁶ See, generally, Jonathan C. Augustine, "And When Does the Black Church Get Political?: Responding in the Era of Trump and Making the Black Church Great Again," *Hastings Race & Poverty Law Journal*, 2020, Vol. 17, No. 1:87-132. The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a sociopolitical, Christocentric, ecclesial body that is also the oldest connectionally-operated black Church in America. See AME Sunday School Union, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville: AME Sunday School Union, 2016), 7-11; see also Lincoln & Mamiya, 51-52. It originates from a 1787 breakaway from the then-Methodist Episcopal Church (the precursor to the United Methodist Church), in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. African American worshipers formed the Free African Society, a precursor to the legal establishment of the AME Church, because they were treated in a discriminatory manner during worship. See Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet: Bishop Richard Allen, the AME Church, and the Black Founding Fathers* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), 173-76; see also *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*, 16. Argument can therefore be made that the black church has been involved in resistance politics since its inception in 1787.

¹⁹⁷ In beginning the letter, King expressly indicated he was writing in response to fellow clergy members who criticized his actions. He also implied that critics of his work were legion:

While confined here in Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling our present activities 'unwise and untimely.' Seldom, if ever, do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I sought to answer all of the criticism that cross my desk, my secretaries would be engaged in little else in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court’s decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in public schools, it is rather paradoxical to find us consciously breaking laws. One may well ask, ‘How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?’ The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: there are *just* and there are *unjust* laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that ‘An unjust law is no law at all.’¹⁹⁸

In elaborating on King’s logic, Paris writes, “King had advocated time and again that those who acquiesce to evil participate in promoting evil and are, therefore, as much the agents of evil as the intimidators themselves.”¹⁹⁹ King sought to be neither an agent of evil or an oppressive intimidator. Instead, as someone molded by a “suffering servant theology,”²⁰⁰ King risked his life for civil reconciliation when he went to jail in Birmingham.²⁰¹

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, James M. Washington, ed. (New York: HarperOne, 1996), 289.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 293 (emphasis in original).

¹⁹⁹ Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 120–21.

²⁰⁰ The Civil Rights Movement’s suffering servant theology—paraphrased as redemptive hope through sacrificial suffering—is based on the messianic connection of Isaiah 53 to certain parts of the gospel narratives. See, e.g., William H. Bellinger, Jr. & William R. Famer, eds., *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998). In 1960, at the request of the editors of *Christian Century*, King also wrote on his view of suffering, commenting on its redemptive nature. In a brief essay, he wrote:

My personal trials have also taught me the value of unmerited suffering. As my sufferings mounted, I soon realized that there were two ways that I could respond to my situation: either to react with bitterness or to seek to transform the suffering into a creative force. I decided to follow the latter course. Recognizing the necessity for suffering I have tried to make it a virtue. If only to save myself from bitterness, *I have attempted to see my personal ordeals as an opportunity to transform myself and heal the people involved in the tragic situation which now obtains. I have lived these last few years with the conviction that unearned suffering is redemptive.*

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Suffering and Faith,” in *A Testament of Hope*, 41 (reproducing an essay from *Christian Century* 77 (Apr. 27, 1960): 510) (emphasis added). Stanly Hauerwas suggests that, for King, this connection also linked Gandhi to Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. See Stanley Hauerwas, “The Weapon of Love: How Martin Luther King, Jr. Became Nonviolent,” *ABC Religion and Ethics* (January 16, 2017), <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/01/16/4604568.htm>. The suffering servant theology was also evident in other clergy-led acts of civil disobedience throughout the Civil Rights Movement. I also explore events like the Freedom Rides of 1961 and the infamous 1965 Bloody Sunday march over the Edmund Pettis Bridge, as acts undergirded by a suffering servant theology, where oppressed people were motivated by faith in seeking equality. See generally, Jonathan C. Augustine, *The Keys Are Being Passed: Race, Law, Religion and the Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement* (Houston: ROM Publishing Co., 2014), 13–20.

King also expounded on his discernment between “just” and “unjust” laws in writing *Letter From Birmingham Jail*.

Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-man code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a law that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: an unjust law is a human law not rooted in eternal law and natural law. Any law that uplifts human personality is just. Any law that degrades human personality is unjust. All segregation statutes are unjust because segregation distorts the soul and damages the personality. It gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and the segregated a false sense of inferiority.²⁰²

Considering King’s explanation, I argue the very genesis of the Civil Rights Movement—Rosa Parks’ refusal to move to the back of the bus in Montgomery—was the consequence of a suffering servant theology juxtaposed with civil disobedience.²⁰³

In *Walker v. City of Birmingham* (1967), the United States Supreme Court records that in the days prior to King’s arrest in Birmingham, he and other black ministers unsuccessfully

²⁰¹ In believing laws requiring racial segregation and discrimination were “unjust laws,” and that suffering was necessary to eradicate such injustices, James Cone described King as follows:

Unlike most Christians . . . King accepted Jesus’ cross, knowing that following Jesus involved suffering and, as it did for Jesus, the possibility of unjust death. Even as a child, King’s favorite song was ‘I Want to Be More Like Jesus’; and as a minister and civil rights activist, he put that song into practice until he, like Jesus, was killed trying to set people free. While King never thought he had achieved the messianic standard of love found in Jesus’ cross, he did believe that his suffering and that of African Americans and their supporters would in some mysterious way redeem America from the sin of white supremacy, and thereby make this nation a just place for all. Who can doubt that those who suffered in the [B]lack freedom movement made America a better place than before? *Their suffering redeemed America from the sin of legalized segregation.*

James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011), 88-89 (emphasis in original).

²⁰² King, “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” 293.

²⁰³ Parks’ dissident act of civil disobedience was in response to the 1950s sociopolitical climate. After she was arrested for refusing to follow a bus driver’s order to vacate her seat for a white passenger, King and almost all the other black ministers in Montgomery led a boycott of the city’s bus system. See King, *Stride Toward Freedom*, 43–48; see also James H. Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 57–58 (discussing King’s study of Henry David Thoreau while a student at Morehouse College, and Gandhi while at Crozier Seminary, as influences on King’s philosophical development regarding civil disobedience). It bears noting that Jackson, then-leader of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A., Inc., vehemently opposed King’s use of civil disobedience, attempting to malign Thoreau and distinguish Gandhi. See Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 89-92.

applied for a parade permit, as required by municipal ordinance, to protest against the city's discriminatory conditions.²⁰⁴ In denying their permit application, Birmingham Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor publicly remarked, "No, you will not get a parade permit in Birmingham, Alabama to picket. I will picket you over to City Jail."²⁰⁵ After the Alabama courts enjoined the ministers from assembling, the Supreme Court affirmed.

The Court did not consider the merits of the ministers' actions. Instead, it looked only at the fact they assembled without the requisite permit:

The rule of law that Alabama followed in this case reflects a belief that in the fair administration of justice no man can be judge in his own case, however exalted his situation, however righteous his motives, and irrespective of his race, color, politics, or religion. This Court cannot hold that the petitioners were constitutionally free to ignore all the procedures of the law and carry their battles to the streets. One may sympathize with the petitioners' impatient commitment to their cause. But respect for judicial proceedings is a small price to pay for the civilizing hand of law, which alone can give abiding meaning to constitutional freedom.²⁰⁶

For King to march without the requisite permit, disobeying what he morally deemed an "unjust law" and readily accept incarceration as the consequences of his actions, King's theology was not only rooted in civil disobedience,²⁰⁷ it was also biblically-based.

After his arrest and subsequent incarceration, King also addressed the on-going necessity for oppressed, religious groups to engage in the resistance of civil disobedience to take-on their governmental oppressors. With a biblically-based ethic, King wrote:

²⁰⁴ Walker v. City of Birmingham, 388 U.S. 307, 307 (1967).

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 325. Andrew Young, then-one of King's lieutenants in the Civil Rights Movement, describes Bull Connor as "a man who made no secret of his contempt for black citizens. Connor had become a sort of folk hero to racist everywhere." Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden: The Civil Rights Movement and the Transformation of America* (New York: HarperCollins Pub., Inc., 1996), 200.

²⁰⁶ Walker v. City of Birmingham, 320-21.

²⁰⁷ See David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: HarperCollins Pub., Inc., 1986), 224.

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks, before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire.²⁰⁸

Further, King also defended the so-called “extremist” nature of his actions by showing their moral justification.

As I continued to think about the matter, I gradually gained a bit of satisfaction from being considered an extremist. Was not Jesus an extremist in love.... Was not Amos an extremist for justice—‘Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.’ Was not Paul an extremist for the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁰⁹

King was therefore proud to lead a movement that was a continuation of centuries’ old prophetic, political resistance. Such an ecclesiology of faith-based political engagement, seeking governmental redress for those pushed to the margins, is an exemplar of civil reconciliation.

3. Pragmatic and Revolutionary Christianity in King’s Ministry

King’s nonviolent leadership in the 1950s and 60s was largely influenced by his study of Mohandas Gandhi’s civil disobedience during the Indian Independence Movement of the

²⁰⁸ King, “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” 294. Moreover, in illustrating this implied connection between a suffering servant theology and civil disobedience in King, James Cone wrote:

King saw in Jesus’ unmerited suffering on the cross God’s answer to black suffering on the lynching tree. Even in the face of the killing of four little girls in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham (September 15, 1963), King did not lose his faith that love is redemptive, even for the whites who committed the unspeakable crime. In his ‘Eulogy for the Martyred Children,’ King said that ‘they did not die in vain. God still has a way of wringing good out of evil. History has proven over and over again that unmerited suffering is redemptive.’ He contended that their ‘innocent blood’ could serve as a ‘redemptive force’ to transform ‘our whole Southland from the low road of man’s inhumanity to man to the high road of peace and brotherhood.’

Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 86-87 (emphasis added)(internal citations omitted).

²⁰⁹ King, “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” 297.

1940s.²¹⁰ Most important, however, insofar as King was a product of the church, is that King was influenced by a nexus of Gandhi's nonviolent resistance and Jesus's unconditional love. In specifically addressing this formative connection, King wrote:

From the beginning a basic philosophy guided the movement. This guiding principle has since been referred to variously as nonviolent resistance, noncooperation, and passive resistance. But in the first days of the protest none of these expressions was mentioned; the phrase most often heard was 'Christian love.' It was the Sermon on the Mount, rather than a doctrine of passive resistance, that initially inspired the Negroes of Montgomery to dignified social action. It was Jesus of Nazareth that stirred the Negroes to protest with the creative weapon of love.

Nonviolent resistance had emerged as the technique of the movement, while love stood as the regulating ideal. In other words, Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Gandhi furnished the method.²¹¹

A theologically-based morality was indeed the impetus for Gandhi's use of civil disobedience in India, as well as King's use of civil disobedience in the Jim Crow South. Indeed, King's theologically-based position on civil disobedience set a tone for civil reconciliation in the entire Civil Rights Movement.

In noting the significance of King's theological-rooted work toward civil reconciliation, Cook writes:

Evangelical liberalism and the social gospel repudiated the traditional conception of human nature; they replaced that traditional conception with an antithetical view and reached a different conclusion about the relationships between church and state as well as between Christians and the evil world in which they lived.

²¹⁰ See, generally, Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, From the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 2005), 45-46; see also Yxta Maya Murray, "A Jurisprudence of Nonviolence," *Connecticut Public Interest Law Journal*, 2009, Vol. 9, no. 1:65-159 (providing an excellent analysis of how King understood Gandhi's position on civil disobedience and how it influenced his leadership in the Civil Rights Movement).

²¹¹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "The Violence of Desperate Men," *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Clayborne Carson, ed. (New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1998), 67.

King used these two strands of theology to challenge the view of human nature which counseled African-Americans to be patient in the face of oppression.²¹²

Further, in describing this phenomenon, and underscoring its theological influence, Vincent Harding also wrote,

the movement's bold strand of nonviolence (and we will surely teach that there were other, sometimes competing, strands) provides a chance and a challenge that cannot be left unmet. It allows us to go with our students as deeply as we choose toward the sources of that lifestyle, delving, for instance, into the experience and experiments of Gandhi and his movement, into the paths of the Buddha, working our way toward Jesus of Nazareth and his justice-obsessed brother and sister prophets of Israel, moving quietly, firmly into the river-deep meditations of Howard Thurman—perhaps even reading more of King than the worthy and well-worn 1963 March on Washington “I Have a Dream” speech. We must work our way into the depths of spirit which supplied the movement with so much of its early power.²¹³

The depths of spirit that influenced King and the black church's engagement in politics, and consequently the church's work toward civil reconciliation, emanated from a theologically-based ethic that was rooted in civil disobedience.

A part of civil reconciliation was also King's ecclesiology emphasizing the church's necessary involvement in secular affairs. King underscored the egalitarian theme of common personality, a theme Paul impliedly expressed in each of the three scriptures detailed in the

²¹² Cook, “Beyond Critical Legal Studies,” 95-96. In laying a contextual foundation for what he terms “traditional conception,” in a section on King's deconstruction of critical theology that precedes the quote above, Cook writes:

Even if the privileging of order over freedom and the conception of human nature as fundamentally evil over its opposite conception were not seen as incoherent, King realized that these privileged conceptions *need not be accepted as universally valid*. They might be viewed as historically contingent and conditioned, and thus subject to *change if individuals are willing to engage in transformative struggles* to alter the conditions under which these conceptions appear coherent.

Ibid., 95 (emphasis added).

²¹³ Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1990), 98.

previous chapter (Gal. 3:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:17-22; and Rom. 5-8). King addressed this theme in *Letter From Birmingham Jail* when he wrote:

I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the eighth century prophets left their little villages and carried their ‘thus saith the Lord’ far beyond the boundaries of their hometowns; and just as the Apostle Paul left his little village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to practically every hamlet and city in the Greco-Roman world, I too am compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my particular hometown. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial ‘outside agitator’ idea. Anyone who lives in the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere in this country.²¹⁴

This interconnectedness of human personality and a willingness to address governmental actors, in the prophetic domain of ministry, is arguably one of the best examples of civil reconciliation in King’s published writings.

King believed that nonviolent protests, in the form of civil disobedience, would defeat segregation in the Jim Crow South. Paris writes, “When it became apparent that the problems confronted in Montgomery were widespread throughout the South, and when it became clear that nonviolent resistance should be a model for effecting social change in the South, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference became the official institutional embodiment of the method.”²¹⁵ Cook, however, arguably best summarizes King’s work toward civil reconciliation by writing,

King balanced pragmatic and revolutionary Christianity as well as rights and duties. King’s prophetic Christianity recognized the importance of both rights and duties as a practical matter. Rights were prerequisites to survival; nonviolent civil disobedience was the heart of duty. Duty was consistent with rights because,

²¹⁴ King, “Letter From Birmingham Jail,” 290.

²¹⁵ Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 99.

through civil disobedience, one could simultaneously demonstrate respect for the rule of law and in preserving social order, while opposing laws supportive of unjust social orders. Thus, King envisioned a rule of law rooted in experience and responsive to the conditions of oppression that denied the humanity of so many.²¹⁶

I therefore argue King's theologically-inspired ethic of taking on the secular word for a community rooted in equality is the heart of civil reconciliation. Indeed, although there was still a dichotomy between dominant and marginalized groups, the black church's work in civil reconciliation helped institutionalize a "civil version" of Paul's social reconciliation and theology of equality.

III Revisiting Forgiveness as a Part of Reconciliation: King's Theology During the Civil Rights Movement and a More Contemporary and Applied Response

This chapter began by noting the importance of forgiveness in any genuine dialogue regarding reconciliation. In addressing this difficulty, Boesak writes:

Accountability with the intention to redeem is subversive of our natural inclination not just to judge, but to completely write-off perpetrators. Therefore, it is also subversive to our resistance to reconciliation. The other person may have done monstrous deeds . . . but is still 'a child of God.' That means that no human being can prescribe to God who might be acceptable as God's children, that before God our sins are grave enough for God to disclaim us all.

No one pretends that this is easy, but if reconciliation needs political forgiveness, reconciliation needs communal and personal forgiveness. For reconciliation to be genuine, we should allow ourselves to be subverted by the grace and mercy of God. Radical reconciliation requires less self-righteousness, less hypocrisy, less self-defensiveness, less judgmental arrogance.²¹⁷

Although not easy, *genuine forgiveness*—a part of the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to the church (2 Cor. 5:17-18)—is required.

²¹⁶ Cook, "Beyond Critical Legal Studies," 100-01.

²¹⁷ Allan Aubrey Boesak, "Subversive Piety," *Radical Reconciliation*, 148-49.

In a similar vein, after discussing Dietrich Bonhoeffer, J. Deotis Roberts writes of the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation:

Forgiveness and reconciliation come to sinful humanity through the incarnation, which includes the cross and the resurrection. Grace is ‘costly’ and is manifest only when there is an ‘I-though’ encounter between us and God. Knowing the measure of God’s love expressed in God’s redemptive act in Christ should humble the Christian and engage one to love and forgive.²¹⁸

Love *and* forgiveness were indeed hallmarks of King’s ministry, during the Civil Rights Movement, and the ministry of reconciliation as exemplified by responses to the June 1968 racial-motivated killings at Mother Emanuel AME Church.

Forgiveness, as required for genuine reconciliation, manifested for King through his Christian understanding of love. This is what Jesus taught during his famous Sermon on the Mount. Matthew records Jesus saying, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven . . .” (Matt. 5:43-45).²¹⁹

In referencing this Christian understanding of love, King described the concept of *agape*, when he wrote:

Agape is understanding, creative, redemptive, good will toward all men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. Theologians would say that it is the love of God operating in the human heart. So that when one rises to love on

²¹⁸ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (2d. ed.)(Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 62-63.

²¹⁹ In addressing the critical importance of these verses, as they relate to the profound nature of Jesus’s teachings in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, Donald Senior writes,

Matthew lays out diametrically opposed human responses to an enemy’s provocation: hatred or love. *The follower of Jesus responds with love rather than hatred* because this is how one’s ‘Father in heaven’ acts. The greater righteousness of the disciple means seeking to be ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’ . . . as God is ‘perfect’; *in this context Matthew describes God’s characteristic action as indiscriminate, gratuitous love toward the enemy.*

Donald Senior, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 105-06 (emphasis added).

this level, he loves men not because he likes them, not because their ways appeal to him, but he loves every man because God loves him. And he rises to the point of loving the person who does an evil deed while hating the deed that the person does. I think this is what meant when he said ‘love your enemies.’²²⁰

This *agape* love, in King’s thought, is what Paris describes by writing, “Indeed, he contended that there would be no permanent solution to the race problem until oppressed people developed the capacity to love their enemies.”²²¹

In addition to addressing love in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus also addressed forgiveness. In what is popularly called “The Lord’s Prayer,” Matthew records Jesus as teaching his listeners how to pray by saying, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12). In categorically describing the Christian mandate of “biblical forgiveness,”—something that is similar to King’s “love of enemies,” but different enough to be a conceptual cousin, rather than a sibling—Anthony Thompson, an ordained minister and surviving spouse of one of the nine victims killed in the Emanuel AME Church massacre, writes:

Unlike society’s forgiveness that is packed with myths, biblical forgiveness has no strings attached to it. It is forgiveness without condition, needing no apology, no compensation for the loss, no face-to-face meeting, and no response from the offender. It is simply a victim’s unquestioning forgiveness given as a gift of grace to the offender . . . With biblical forgiveness, victims choose to forgive another person because they, themselves, have been completely forgiven by God. Their own sinful debt has been paid in full with no conditions—an underserved grace gift from their heavenly Father.²²²

Most powerfully, however, in reflecting on God’s forgiving grace, Thompson also writes, “I have forgiven Dylann Roof completely because God has forgiven me completely. To society, this type of no-strings-attached forgiveness seems illogical. But to Christ-believers who have

²²⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience,” (address before the Fellowship of the Concerned, Nov. 16, 1961), *A Testament of Hope*, 46-47.

²²¹ Paris, *Black Religious Leaders*, 113.

²²² Thompson, *Called to Forgive*, 142.

experienced God's loving and complete forgiveness, biblical forgiveness makes perfect sense."²²³ Thompson's narrative completely illustrates the nature of forgiveness as an element of reconciliation.

Further, in specifically noting reconciliation as making things new (2 Cor. 5:17-18) and highlighting its salvific importance, while also negating any perceived necessity for understanding in order to forgive, Thompson also writes, "We don't have to understand how Jesus can take our sins, suffer for us, die on a cross, rise from the grave, and offer us complete salvation and reconciliation with God. It's a mystery that on a human level we cannot ever completely understand."²²⁴

Additionally, Thompson noted that although he could not understand how, after his crimes, Roof could show no signs of regret, repentance, or remorse, Thompson nonetheless decided to forgive him.²²⁵ In emphasizing biblical forgiveness, he writes:

People often ask me, 'How can you forgive Roof when he has not apologized for Myra's murder and shows no pangs of conscience or contrition, lament or sorrow, guilt or shame?

And my answer to each person is always the same" Even premeditated murder can be forgiven. I'm not saying it's easy to forgive a person who has killed your loved one, but murder is a sin just like any other sin. And according to Scripture, a sin is a sin, and we all are guilty of sin. I remind them of Romans 3:23: 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'²²⁶

For Thompson, therefore, to receive forgiveness from God, one must be willing to give forgiveness to other humans. Indeed, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "For if you forgive

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid., 44-45.

²²⁵ See *ibid.*, 53.

²²⁶ Ibid.

others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but of you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matt. 6:14-15).

IV Conclusion

I began this chapter by arguing, insofar as reconciliation is a ministry left to the church, forgiveness is a requisite element of reconciliation. Moreover, in arguing civil reconciliation is a biblically-based social ethic that puts Paul’s theology of equality to practical application by prophetically challenging governmental oppression, King’s leadership in the Civil Rights Movement is arguably the epitome of civil reconciliation.

Although forgiveness is never easy, the literature reviewed herein notes that genuine reconciliation—wherein the oppressed can be reconciled with the oppressor—necessitates embracing a Christocentric ethic that is rooted in Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. For King, the salient and motivating take-away was (*agape*) love, juxtaposed with a Gandhi-influenced nonviolent resistance. This King-led, black church exemplar embraced civil disobedience, along with a suffering servant theology, to love oppressors while simultaneously hating their acts of oppression.

In more recent years, particularly after the June 2015 racially-motivated massacre at Emanuel AME Church, a black surviving spouse and clergyman demonstrated “biblical forgiveness” in expressly recognizing that, because *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, if humans want to receive forgiveness from God, they must be able to give forgiveness to one another. Accordingly, creating balanced social relationships, in the wake of marginalized groups demanding governmental redress, *genuine forgiveness* is an essential element of civil reconciliation.

Chapter 4: The Response to Civil Reconciliation: White Evangelicalism and the Southern Strategy Give Rise to “Make America Great Again”

In his successful campaign for the presidency, Richard Nixon relied on suburbs like those around Atlanta’s Northside as a predominant part of his ‘silent majority’ coalition. The 1968 presidential election was the first in American history in which votes from the suburbs outnumbered the votes of either rural or urban areas, and the Republican Party did its best to capitalize on the demographic changes . . .

As the Nixon campaign embraced the politics of white flight, many assumed the Republicans were following a ‘southern strategy’ focused on the rural and working-class supporters of George Wallace. There were, of course, links between the segregationist policies of the Old South and the Republican campaign in the New South . . . Despite the strong imprints of Old South segregationists on the 1968 campaign, Nixon’s ‘southern strategy’ was not an appeal to the rural and working-class whites who supported Wallace and [Strom] Thurman. It was, instead, an appeal to middle-class suburbanites.²²⁷

I Introduction

In the previous chapters, I detailed three forms of reconciliation: (1) salvific; (2) social; and (3) civil. While embracing the biblical ethic that reconciliation is a ministry left to the church (2 Cor. 5:16-19), the previous chapter explored civil reconciliation as putting faith into action. With forgiveness as a requisite, civil reconciliation embodied both clergy and laity sacrificing of themselves and demanding governmental redress through policies and laws to ensure full civic participation for *all people*, in all aspects of American life. Among the most controversial of these measures, insofar as its success caused a counter reaction, were the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the policy of affirmative action.

If the old cliché is true that “Every Action Has a Reaction,” the Civil Rights Movement’s clergy-led work in civil reconciliation caused a white, working-class reaction that was also related to the church. Christian evangelicalism, popularized by Billy Graham, was cooped by

²²⁷ Kevin M. Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), 253.

the partisan politics of Richard Nixon’s southern strategy as a response to minority advancement. These political and conservative evangelical factions wed within the church, were nurtured by the politics of Nixon and Ronald Reagan, and ultimately gave birth to a counter narrative, the “Make America Great Again” political and religious alliance that elected Donald Trump.

Trump’s campaign slogan was aimed squarely at the bloc of voters who viewed the last half-century’s post-Civil Rights Movement changes as negative.²²⁸ “He promised to turn back the clock to a time when members of that group enjoyed greater influence and respect.”²²⁹ Moreover, although racial divisions in the United States are anything but new,²³⁰ Barack Obama’s presidency proved to unearth racial enmity through Trump’s incendiary campaign rhetoric.²³¹

Just as the Civil Rights Movement’s work in civil reconciliation was at the intersection of law and religion, as faith communities demanded governmental action, the same can be said of the narrative leading to Trump’s presidency. Although there is arguably very little evidence of Trump being “religious,” he was nonetheless able to capture the lion’s share of white evangelical

²²⁸ See Alan I. Amramowitz, *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and The Rise of Donald Trump* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 12-13.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

²³⁰ See, e.g., Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 4-6 (describing advances made by African Americans, in the post-Civil War period of Reconstruction, and the Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) Supreme Court decision that undermined what was perceived as progress, by institutionalizing “separate but equal”); see also A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., *In the Matter of Color: Race & The American Legal Process: The Colonial Period* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978)(tracing America’s disparate treatment of minorities in the legal process, beginning with Virginia’s 1619 pre-statutory discrimination against blacks).

²³¹ In the years leading up to the 2016 presidential election, Trump began the “birther movement,” a verbal assault on Obama’s legitimacy as president of the United States, supported by allegations that Obama’s birth certificate was inauthentic, claiming Obama he was actually born in Africa, not the state of Hawaii. Moreover, while igniting xenophobic passions and appealing to the deepest forms of prejudice in the immigration debate, Trump also called Mexicans rapists and murders, alleging immigration was in a state of crisis at the U.S./Mexico border, and that he would build a wall to keep Mexicans out of the United States while also having Mexico pay for the wall. See generally Kevin M. Kruse & Julian E. Zelizer, *Fault Lines: A History of the United States Since 1974* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019), 333-34.

voters in the 2016 election, with promises to appoint Supreme Court justices who would overturn *Roe v. Wade*.²³² Indeed, in recent decades, advocacy against *Roe* has become one of the benchmarks to court evangelicals.²³³

While pandering to what has become a politically predictable voting bloc, during an October 2016 presidential debate against Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, Trump unequivocally touted his pro-life stance in predicting the decision's demise. In covering that presidential debate, journalist Dan Mangan writes:

Donald Trump said the overturning of the landmark Supreme Court decision giving women the right to abortion 'will happen, automatically,' if he is elected president and gets to appoint justices to the high court.

²³² 410 U.S. 113 (1973). In describing this landmark Supreme Court decision, Erwin Chemerinsky writes, "in *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court held that the Constitution protects a right for a woman to choose to terminate her pregnancy prior to viability—the time at which the fetus can survive on its own outside of the womb." Erwin Chemerinsky, *Constitutional Law: Principles and Policies*, 4th ed. (New York: Wolters Kluwer Law & Business, 2011), 839.

²³³ One of the great ironies associated with *Roe v. Wade* is that it was almost an afterthought in an attempt to galvanize evangelical voters and engage them in partisan politics. Randall Balmer chronicles this in *The Making of Evangelicalism*, arguing that although *Roe* was decided in 1973, an anti-abortion crusade *did not* become a part of the evangelical leaders' political agenda until just before the 1980 presidential election. The original galvanizing issue was opposition to the IRS's attempts to enforce the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by denying tax exempt status to Bob Jones University, a Christian institution that discriminated in its admissions and student conduct policies. See, generally, Randall Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond* (Waco: Baylor Univ. Press, 2010), 62-66. Jemar Tisby shares Balmer's perspective, writing that "in the early 1970s, abortion was not the primary issue that catalyzed the Religious Right, as it would be in later years. Initially, the Christian response to *Roe v. Wade* was mixed. Instead, conservative voters coalesced around the issue of racial integration in schools." Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 161 (internal citations omitted) (opening a discussion about the IRS denying Bob Jones University's tax-exempt status because of its discriminatory policies). Further, in *Hijacked*, Mike Slaughter and Chuck Gutenson trace the partisan political shifts of white evangelical Christians on the issue of abortion, aligning with Republican Party candidates from the late 1960s through the late 1980s, by writing:

At the end of President Reagan's second term in 1988 . . . identifying as Republican became for the first time a significant independent predictor of opposition to abortion among white evangelical Protestants. From 1988 to 2008, even when controlling for a number of demographic factors, identifying as Republican has consistently been a significant independent predictor of opposition to abortion among white evangelical Protestants.

Mike Slaughter & Charles E. Gutenson, *Hijacked: Responding to the Partisan Church Divide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2012), 7.

‘I am pro-life,’ Trump said during Wednesday night’s presidential debate when asked whether he wanted that decision, *Roe v. Wade*, reversed by the Supreme Court.

Trump said that if the ruling were to be reversed, laws on the legality or illegality of abortion would “go back to the individual states” to decide, which was the case prior to *Roe v. Wade*.

But when moderator Chris Wallace pressed him on whether he wanted the ruling overturned, Trump said, ‘That will happen, automatically in my opinion,’ because he would get to nominate potentially several justices to the court.²³⁴

Trump courted the same political faction of evangelical voters who gave overwhelming political support to the Nixon and Regan candidacies before him. Moreover, in continuing this pattern, “According to data from the national exit poll, white born-again or evangelical voters favored Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton by 80 percent to 16 percent . . .”²³⁵

Further, in laying the groundwork for Trump’s 2016 election, after the Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*,²³⁶ a case that invalidated Section 4(a) of the same Voting Rights Act that was the Civil Rights Movement’s most empirical measure of success,²³⁷

²³⁴ Dan Mangan, “Trump: I’ll Appoint Supreme Court Justices to Overturn *Roe v. Wade* Abortion Case,” CNBC (Oct. 19, 2016), <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/19/trump-ill-appoint-supreme-court-justices-to-overturn-roe-v-wade-abortion-case.html>.

²³⁵ Amramowitz, *The Great Alignment*, 11-12.

²³⁶ 133 S.Ct. 2612 (2013).

²³⁷ In previous scholarship, while writing with Chief Judge U. Gene Thibodeaux of the Louisiana Third Circuit Court of Appeal, we highlighted the legislation’s empirical significance by contextualizing its impact in Louisiana. After chronicling a long history of litigation challenging the Voting Rights Act’s constitutionality, we noted the legislation’s extensive per capita impact in dramatically increasing the number of African Americans elected to the state’s judiciary, in comparison to African Americans elected to the bench in America’s three largest states, California, Texas, and New York. Jonathan C. Augustine & U. Gene Thibodeaux, “Forty Years Later: Chronicling the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its Impact on Louisiana’s Judiciary,” *Louisiana Law Review*, 66.2 (2006): 453-94. Moreover, in also noting the legislation’s significance and sociopolitical consequences resulting from it, Antoine Joseph writes, “In 1990, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Voting Rights Act, Virginia would have an elected black governor, there would be 24 black members of Congress, 417 black state legislators, 4,388 black officers of city and county governments, and six of the ten largest cities would have black mayors.” Antoine L. Joseph, *The Dynamics of Racial Progress: Economic Inequality and Race Relations Since Reconstruction*, (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 135; see also Alex Poinsett, *Walking With Presidents: Louis Martin and the Rise of Black Political Power* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Pub, 1997, 150-153) (discussing the advances many African Americans made, after the Voting Rights Act became law, especially through litigation in states like Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama).

several state legislatures enacted laws that had a restrictive effect on voting.²³⁸ Accordingly, to address the sociopolitical counternarrative to civil reconciliation—one that has caused significant factions within both the church and secular world—this fourth chapter explores how political partisanship has coopted the church, while also arguing that the church must return to her apostolic origins of diversity and inclusivity, to be an exemplar for society-at-large.

To undergird this focal point, I argue the Voting Rights Act and affirmative action led to factions within both society and the church, ultimately giving rise to express attempts to unravel the church’s work in civil reconciliation. As a genesis of this division, Nixon’s “law and order” campaign politics in the late 1960s was a response to the black church in the Civil Rights Movement.

Nixon was pointing to the civil rights movement and its nonviolent direct action, not as the endeavor to secure long-denied justice to black Americans but as the tarmac to tyranny and disregard for the law.

Some historians and political analysts have called Nixon’s approach the ‘Southern Strategy.’ *The Southern Strategy exploited racial backlash against the civil rights movement, as well as an emerging sense of white, middle-class suburban identity, to mobilize disaffected white voters in support of the Republican Party. Richard M. Nixon and his advisors adopted this Southern Strategy as they reached out to the ‘great silent majority of Americans,’ a demographic that increasingly included evangelicals.* This conservative approach to policies in the 1970s and in the decades that followed began to court voters with white racial resentment and to downplay the concerns of black communities.²³⁹

Indeed, a statistical analysis of the Voting Rights Act empirically demonstrates its significance in increasing African American political participation.

²³⁸ As the Brennan Center notes, in addressing the significance of *Shelby County*, “Within 24 hours of the ruling, Texas announced that it would implement a strict photo ID law. Two other states, Mississippi and Alabama, also began to enforce photo ID laws that had previously been barred because of federal preclearance.” The Brennan Center for Justice, “The Effects of *Shelby County v. Holder*,” (Aug. 6, 2018), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/policy-solutions/effects-shelby-county-v-holder>.

²³⁹ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 157-58 (internal citations omitted) (emphasis added).

This exploitation of an anti-civil reconciliation resentment in the late 1960s and early 1970s began a partisan political relationship that Reagan solidified by in the 1980s. That same relationship led to Trump’s deadly extremism in 2016 and beyond.²⁴⁰

This interdisciplinary chapter—connected through theology, law, history, and political science—proceeds in four parts. After this introduction, Part Two overviews the Voting Rights Act and affirmative action, two of the Civil Rights Movement’s most successful but simultaneously controversial measures that both indirectly affected the church by causing a backlash in the form of a political fusion between white evangelical Christians and the Republican Party. Part Three then proceeds by showing the church’s complicit role in advancing a white nationalism agenda, exploring the political allegiance and partisan politics of evangelical Christians and the Republican Party that resulted from the indirect work of Billy Graham and the very intentional work of Nixon’s southern strategy. Indeed, Trump’s Make America Great Again narrative follows an established playbook for invoking evangelical Christians’ political support to undermine civil reconciliation’s progress.

Part Three also addresses blatant attempts to frustrate civil reconciliation, highlighting some of the xenophobic divisions that led to Trump’s 2016 election and his divisive style of governance. In describing Trump’s exploitation of political divisions, Abramowitz writes, “Perhaps more than any presidential candidate since George Wallace in 1968, and certainly more

²⁴⁰ See, e.g., Peter Baker & Michael D. Shear, “El Paso Shooting Suspect’s Manifesto Echoes Trump’s Language,” *The New York Times* (Aug. 4., 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/04/us/politics/trump-mass-shootings.html>; Mehdi Hasan, “After El Paso, We Can No Longer Ignore Trump’s Role in Inspiring Mass Shootings,” *The Intercept* (August 4, 2019), <https://theintercept.com/2019/08/04/el-paso-dayton-mass-shootings-donald-trump>; see also Caitlyn Oprysko, “Trump Rhetoric Freshly Condemned After Mass Shootings,” *POLITICO* (Aug. 4., 2019), <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/08/04/beto-orourke-trump-el-paso-white-nationalist-1445700>.

than any major party candidate in the last sixty years, Donald Trump reinforced some of the deepest social and cultural divisions within the American electorate.”²⁴¹

Insofar as Trump’s fusion of white evangelical Christians and Republican Party politics is associated with “groupthink,” in *Disunity in Christ*, Christena Cleveland explains this phenomenon by writing, “Groupthink happens when the group members are so pressured into putting forth a united front while making a decision that they fail to voice legitimate differences in opinion.”²⁴² In *Everyday Bias*, Howard Ross also writes, “When members of the group are too conscious of the opinions of others and begin to emulate each other and conform rather than think differently, these biases become almost automatic.”²⁴³ This phenomenon exasperates a growing polarization between evangelical and progressive Christians. Moreover, it is what William Barber implicitly addressed in describing his guest appearance on *Real Time with Bill Maher*, a television show hosted by the well-known atheist.

Wearing my clergy collar, I realized that I stood out among his guests. So I decided to announce to Bill that I, too, am an atheist. He seemed taken aback, so I explained that if we were talking about the God who hates poor people, immigrants, and gay folks, I don’t believe in that God either.²⁴⁴

Barber’s implication squarely places him on the more progressive side of Christianity. Considering the more conservative side, however, and its well-documented political allegiance to Republican presidential candidates, I also raise the question of whether Trump’s personal contradictions have exposed breaks that haven’t been public, at least, in more than forty years.

²⁴¹ Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment*, 170.

²⁴² Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering The Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2013), 40.

²⁴³ Howard J. Ross, *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 58.

²⁴⁴ William J. Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), XV.

Finally, Part Four concludes this chapter, summarizing its contents and also setting a foundation for the solutions discussed in the fifth and concluding chapter. With signs of potential breaks between Trump-allied Republicans and evangelicals, it's time to reunite the church for the ministry of reconciliation to which she is called (2 Cor. 5:16-19). Stated otherwise, in response to Trump's divisive cry to "Make America Great Again," I present a unifying call to "Make the Church Great Again," by creating a space of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency that can be an exemplar for society-at-large.

II The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Policy of Affirmative Action: Two of Civil Reconciliation's Most Measurable Qualifiers of the Civil Rights Movement's Success

In pursuing civil reconciliation, although the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement presumably had many goals, I argue their main goal was achieving full civic participation, without racial discrimination.²⁴⁵ To achieve this, *the church*—divided by theology and race—moved into action. In *Divided by Faith*, the authors summarize this perspective by writing:

The 1950s and early 1960s were a time of great contrast between the race-issue activities of the white and black Christians. It is common knowledge that religious leaders from within black churches led the Civil Rights [M]ovement . . . The connection between religious faith and the social movement is a remarkable moment in American religious history, attesting to the power of religion to call for and realize change. In this case, the goal was freedom from oppression and unequal treatment, at least as expressed through the laws and practices of the South.²⁴⁶

Furthermore, in *Reconstructing the Gospel*, Jonathan Wilson-Hargrove similarly argues "The sin that ripped the gospel in two—the spiritual root of our political divisions and class disparities—is a lie that was told centuries ago to justify owning, using and abusing other human

²⁴⁵ See Jonathan C. Augustine & John K. Pierre, "The Substance of Things Hoped For: Faith, Social Action and Passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965," *Cumberland Law Review*, 46. 2 (2015-16): 425-464, 459.

²⁴⁶ Michael O. Emerson & Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45-46.

beings. Racism is about implicit bias as much as it is about public policy.”²⁴⁷ In moving toward a freedom from oppression, I believe the Voting Rights Act was the most quantifiable measure of civil reconciliation’s success. Accordingly, in this section, I present a history of the legislation and explore its most recent judicial interpretations, before addressing affirmative action, arguably the most controversial means of civil reconciliation emanating from America’s freedom struggle.

(A) The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its Role in Civil Reconciliation

Antonine Joseph quantifies the Voting Rights Act’s significance and impact in ensuring blacks and other minorities were able to register and vote in elections. Moreover, by highlighting specific geographies, he also implies that prior to the law’s enactment, blacks would not have been able to participate in the electoral process in certain parts of the country, especially in the Deep South.

The impact of the Voting Rights Act over the next generation has been accurately termed a ‘quiet revolution’ due to its effect on registration rates for blacks in southern states. In 1964 the number of registered blacks in the former Confederate states was 43 percent of the voting age population. White resistance to black voting registration was substantially greater in the [D]eep South. In Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina, only 22.5 percent of eligible blacks were registered. Between 1964 and 1988 the percentage of registered blacks in the eleven southern states grew from 43 percent to 64 percent. In the five states in the [D]eep South, black registration rose from 22.5 percent to 65 percent. . . . In sum, the Voting Rights Act swamped the existing systems of disenfranchisement.²⁴⁸

Similarly, in *Protest at Selma*, David Garrow quantifies the legislation’s significance in the weeks immediately following August 6, 1965, the date President Johnson signed it into law.

²⁴⁷ Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018), 17.

²⁴⁸ Joseph, *The Dynamics of Racial Progress*, 126.

[B]y the end of August, Civil Service Commission figures indicated that the examiners had processed 27,463 new black registrants. At the same time, a Justice Department survey indicated that an additional 32,000 new black voters had been registered by local officials in Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi . . . for a total increase in black registration of at least 60,000 in those four states alone in less than one month.²⁴⁹

The Voting Rights Act was, therefore, empirically successful in moving toward the goal of full citizen participation.

In *Yick Wo v. Hopkins*, the Supreme Court described the right to vote as fundamental in that it is “preservative of all rights.”²⁵⁰ In actuality, however, it wasn’t until after the Voting Rights Act’s enactment—almost a century after ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment—that this promise guaranteed in Reconstruction become a reality.²⁵¹ Indeed, in *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, one of the first cases addressing the Voting Rights Act’s constitutionality, the Supreme Court wrote, “The Voting Rights Act was designed by Congress to banish the blight of racial discrimination in voting, which has infected the electoral process in parts of our country for nearly a century.”²⁵²

²⁴⁹ David Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 182.

²⁵⁰ 118 U.S. 365, 370 (1886).

²⁵¹ African Americans were originally granted citizenship through the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. Moreover, blacks originally received the right to vote with ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment, which provides, “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” U.S. Const. amend. XV, sect. 1 (1870). Further, the same amendment also provides, “The Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.” *Ibid.*, sect. 2. The Voting Rights Act of 1965, therefore, became necessary because:

[I]tigation of voting rights claims on a case-by-case basis under the Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960, and 1964 attempted to remedy unconstitutional voting practices but had only negligible success, result[ing] in only piecemeal gains . . . and was thwarted by the development of new voting practices abridging or denying the minority right to vote.

Augustine & Thibodeaux, “Forty Years Later,” 457 (internal citations omitted).

²⁵² *South Carolina v. Katzenbach*, 383 U.S. 301, 308 (1966).

1. The Voting Rights Act's Quantifiable Significance

In emphasizing the Voting Rights Act's importance and comparing it to the Civil Rights Act Congress passed the previous year, I argue "although both enactments were extremely significant milestones in the Movement's history . . . the VRA is a better indicator of the Movement's success because it paved the way for Black political participation in American democracy."²⁵³ Consequently, the church-led work of civil reconciliation was empirically successful because of the Voting Rights Act's gains toward inclusiveness.²⁵⁴

In documenting the legislation's necessity to ensure full civic participation, while also highlighting its most significant sections, I also argue:

The VRA's passage unquestionably caused significant changes in the United States. In relevant part and of major importance, the VRA contains two 'meat and potatoes' provisions, sections 2 and 5. Section 2 applies universally to all jurisdictions and was originally incorporated into the VRA as a restatement of the Fifteenth Amendment. Section 2 prohibits states and political subdivisions within the states from instituting any voting qualifications, prerequisites, standards, procedures, or practices in a way that causes the denial or abridgment of the right to vote based on race or color. By contrast, section 5 is considered the heart of the Act, and is arguably the VRA's most important provision. Section 5 applies to only certain covered states and political subdivisions (in other words, 'covered jurisdictions') and requires those states and political subdivisions to acquire either judicial or administrative preclearance for any changes to their electoral laws, procedures, or practices. Based on empirical evidence gathered prior to the VRA's enactment, Section 5 was clearly necessary to guarantee the opportunity and right for Blacks to participate in the electoral process.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Augustine & Pierre, "The Substance of Things Hoped For," 459-60 (internal citations omitted).

²⁵⁴ Jonathan C. Augustine, "The Theology of Civil Disobedience: The First Amendment, Freedom Riders, and Passage of the Voting Rights Act," *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* 21.2 (2012): 255-300, 291.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 294-95 (internal citations omitted). In *Katzenbach*, the Court addressed the significance of Section 4(a)-(d)'s coverage formula, defining the states and political subdivisions to which the Voting Rights Act's remedies apply. *Katzenbach*, 383 U.S. at 315. Consequently, although Sections 2 and 5 are the Voting Rights Act's "meat and potatoes" provisions, they are practically ineffective without Section 4. For example, the Court writes, "In a state or political subdivision covered by § 4(b) of the Act, no person may be denied the right to vote in any election because of his failure to comply with a voting qualification or procedure . . ." *Ibid.* Of particular note, these voting qualifications included literacy tests and requirements of owning property.

Insofar as the legislation was successful in achieving its intended purpose, the clergy-led movement that enabled its passage underscores civil reconciliation's interdisciplinary importance.

In further making an argument for the Voting Rights Act's significance, the National Conference of State Legislatures offers:

The Voting Rights Act is one of the most successful civil rights statutes ever passed by Congress. The act accomplished what the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and numerous federal statutes had failed to accomplish—it provided minority voters an opportunity to participate in the electoral process and elect candidates of their choice, generally free of discrimination.²⁵⁶

In a similar regard, I also argue,

By precipitating Black voter registration gains and targeting discriminatory election techniques, the VRA gave southern Blacks in small towns and rural communities their first opportunity to meaningfully participate in the American electoral process African Americans achieved significant firsts with election to offices never before held by Blacks . . . the [Civil Rights] Movement had progressed from 'protest to politics.'²⁵⁷

Accordingly, the legislation led to unprecedented inclusiveness and political participation. With this level of success, there had to be opposition. I argue the opposition's interest(s) succeeded in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

2. Recent Interpretations of the Voting Rights Act

The Voting Rights Act was a continual embodiment of civil reconciliation in that it continued to allow a diversity of perspectives in the electoral process and continued to foster full civic participation. After its 2006 reauthorization, however,²⁵⁸ the Supreme Court addressed two

²⁵⁶ National Conference of State Legislatures, *Redistricting Law 2000* (Denver: NCSL Printing, 1999), 47.

²⁵⁷ Augustine, "The Theology of Civil Disobedience," 295 (internal citations omitted).

²⁵⁸ In 2006, Congress reauthorized the Voting Rights Act for another 25-years. See, generally, Fannie Lou Hammer, Rosa Parks, and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006, Pub. L. No. 109-246, 120 Stat. 577 (codified at 52 U.S.C. §§ 10302-10305, 10308-10310, 10503 (2012)).

significant challenges to the statute’s constitutionality in *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District No. One v. Holder*,²⁵⁹ and *Shelby County. Northwest Austin* laid the groundwork to undermine the legislation and *Shelby County* struck a critical blow. Consequently, serious question now exists as to whether the Voting Right Act even remains viable.

In *Northwest Austin*, the petitioner was a small utility district with an elected board. Because of its Texas location, it was considered a “covered jurisdiction” under Section 4, requiring federal preclearance before any changes to its election procedure could occur. Although the Court rejected the utility company’s challenges to Section 5’s constitutionality, it significantly undermined the legislation by writing:

The historic accomplishments of the Voting Rights Act are undeniable. When it was first passed, unconstitutional discrimination was rampant and the ‘registration of voting-age whites ran roughly 50 percentage points or more ahead’ of black registration in many covered States . . . Today, the registration gap between black and white voters is in single digits in the covered States; in some of those States, blacks now register and vote at higher rates than whites . . . ‘[M]any of the first generation barriers to minority voter registration and voter turnout that were in place . . . have been eliminated.’²⁶⁰

Consequently, although the *Northwest Austin* Court left the Voting Rights Act intact, it also forecasted the legislation’s demise.²⁶¹ Four years later, *Shelby County* picked-up where *Northwest Austin* left off.

In *Shelby County*, the Court was again faced with a challenge to the constitutionality of Section 5. This time, however, the municipal petitioner—a county in Alabama—also challenged Section 4(b)’s coverage formula. While leaving Section 5 intact, the *Shelby County* Court’s

²⁵⁹ 557 U.S. 193 (2009).

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 201 (internal citations omitted).

²⁶¹ As a point of emphasis, in addition to the foregoing, the *Northwest Austin* Court also wrote, “More than 40 years ago, this Court concluded that ‘exceptional conditions’ prevailing in certain parts of the country justified extraordinary legislation otherwise unfamiliar to other federal system. In part, due to the success of that legislation, we are now a very different Nation.” *Ibid.*, 211 (internal citations omitted).

divided 5-4 majority granted the petitioner’s request and invalidated Section 4(b). The Court decided, although the Voting Rights Act worked in the past, it had essentially run its course in that Section 4(b)’s coverage formula was antiquated and unconstitutional.²⁶² The Court opined, “Coverage today is based on decades-old data and eradicated practices. The formula captures States by reference to literacy tests and low voter registration and turnout in the 1960s and 1970s. But such tests have been banned nationwide for over 40 years.”²⁶³

Although the Court did not invalidate Section 5, until Congress prescribes a new coverage formula to replace Section 4(b), no jurisdiction is subject to Section 5’s preclearance requirements. Proverbially speaking, therefore, the Voting Rights Act—the most empirically successful form of civil reconciliation—no longer has any teeth. *Shelby County* reduced it to watchdog legislation with a history of bark, while simultaneously eliminating its power to bite!

(B) The Policy of Affirmative Action and its Role in Civil Reconciliation

Erwin Chemerinsky writes, “No topic in constitutional law is more controversial than affirmative action.”²⁶⁴ At its core, however, because I regard affirmative action as a form of civil reconciliation, I see it as an imperfect governmental attempt to create the same type of diversity exemplified in the biblically-based rubric of social reconciliation, creating diversity and inclusion by putting people in relationship with the proverbial Other. Conceptually, therefore, affirmative action is no different than when Peter, a Jew, was put in relationship with Cornelius, a Gentile, as he was made to realize God *does not* distinguish between persons (Acts 10:34). Indeed, in remarking on the significance of reconciliation in the Acts 10 narrative, John Perkins

²⁶² 133 S.Ct. 2612 (2013).

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 2627.

²⁶⁴ Chemerinsky, *Constitutional Law*, 751.

writes, “The apostle Peter struggled with the vision of reconciliation. He was steeped in Jewish culture, which had taught him to see non-Jews as unclean. But God opened his eyes to a new truth . . .”²⁶⁵

In *The Pursuit of Fairness*,²⁶⁶ the first historical analysis of affirmative action, Terry Anderson chronologically traces the policy from its genesis with the Great Depression and World War II, through the Supreme Court’s 2003 cases, *Gratz v. Bollinger*,²⁶⁷ and *Grutter v. Bollinger*.²⁶⁸ Moreover, in expounding upon affirmative action’s controversial nature, Anderson writes:

It has been a public policy for four decades . . . and it always raises emotions, contentious debate, and all too often charges of racism. Both sides claim moral superiority. Supporters declare themselves the champions of racial justice, protectors of Martin Luther King’s Dream, while opponents see themselves as the defenders of merit, of colorblind equal protection enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. One thing is clear: the arguments of both sides have merit and are legitimate, and that in itself makes affirmative action an American dilemma.²⁶⁹

Unquestionably, therefore, the government’s attempts to foster diversity and inclusion have proven controversial.

To understand affirmative action’s complexity, while illustratively using the context of higher education,²⁷⁰ I will overview three Supreme Court rulings: (1) *Regents of the University of*

²⁶⁵ John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 33.

²⁶⁶ Terry H. Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness: A History of Affirmative Action* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004).

²⁶⁷ 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

²⁶⁸ 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

²⁶⁹ Anderson, *The Pursuit of Fairness*, x.

²⁷⁰ I have deliberately chosen to contextualize affirmative action in higher education, opposed to employment or the construction industry. See, e.g., Gertrude Ezorsky, *Racism & Justice: The Case for Affirmative Action* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991); see also Paul King, *Reflections on Affirmative Action in Construction* (Bloomington: AuthorHouse Pub., 2009). In the context of higher education, in addition to an academic role, colleges and professional schools play a preparatory role that is similar to the church. They place a subset of society in a place of

California v. Bakke,²⁷¹ the Court's seminal affirmative action case; (2) *Grutter v. Bollinger*,²⁷² a decision wherein Justice Sandra Day O'Connor expressly wrote, "We expect that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary . . .";²⁷³ and (3) *Fisher v. Univ. of Texas at Austin*,²⁷⁴ the Court's most recent 5 to 4 guidance on affirmative action's constitutionality in achieving the compelling interest of diversity in higher education.

1. *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*

In *Bakke*, the University of California at Davis Medical School attempted to increase its incoming class diversity, with two admissions programs for an entering class of 100 students. There was a general admissions program and a separate special admissions program. If a minority applicant was found to be disadvantaged, they were evaluated under the special program, instead of the regular one. Over the course of four years, 44 minority students were admitted to Davis under the regular program and 63 were admitted under the special program. No disadvantaged white applicants were admitted, although several applied. The litigation resulted from a constitutional challenge brought by Allen Bakke, a white male who unsuccessfully applied to Davis under the general admissions program in 1973 and 1974. He challenged the numeric set-aside policy, reserving 16 of the 100 entering student slots for minority students, as violating his constitutional rights.

social exposure that should broaden their capacity to understand others who come from different backgrounds. Moreover, as is the case with professions like law and medicine, the academic institution prepares students to interact with diverse populations by teaching them a service deemed to have social value. The same can obviously be said for the church. It should also prepare people to interact with diverse populations, while also offering multiple things (e.g., evangelism, hope, mission work, etc.) that also have social value.

²⁷¹ 423 U.S. 265 (1978).

²⁷² 539 U.S. 306 (2003).

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 343.

²⁷⁴ 133 S.Ct. 2411 (2013).

In expounding on the importance of diversity, especially in the context of an environment where people are being formed and prepared to go forward and address social challenges in a very diverse society, the Court opined:

Physicians serve a very heterogeneous population. An otherwise qualified medical student with a particular background—whether it be ethnic, geographic, culturally advantaged or disadvantaged—may bring to a professional school of medicine experiences, outlooks, and ideas that enrich the training of its student body and better equip its graduates to render with understanding their vital service to humanity.

Ethnic diversity, however, is only one element in a range of factors a university properly may consider in attaining the goal of a heterogeneous student body.²⁷⁵

Accordingly, the Court clearly saw the importance of diversity in a laboratory-type social setting where ideals and values are formed. Moreover, in addition to ethnic diversity, the Court's opinion opened the door for diversity in other contexts.

Further, although the *Bakke* Court invalidated the use of race alone as a factor in achieving diversity, it agreed there is compelling governmental interest in considering race. Specifically, the Court wrote, “the State has a substantial interest that legitimately may be served by a properly devised admissions program involving the competitive consideration of race and ethnic origin.”²⁷⁶ Accordingly, the Supreme Court validated the importance of diversity in higher education in its first encounter with affirmative action, back in 1978.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵ *Bakke*, 438 U.S. at 314.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁷⁷ In writing for the *Bakke* Court, Associate Justice Lewis Powell leaned heavily on the then-existing Harvard College Admissions Policy, included as an appendix to the *Bakke* decision. Consistent with the belief that diversity includes race and ethnicity, but other factors as well, the Harvard Policy provided:

The belief that diversity adds an essential ingredient to the educational process has long been a tenant of Harvard College admissions. Fifteen or twenty years ago, however, diversity meant students from California, New York, and Massachusetts; city dwellers and farm boys; violinists, painters, and football players; biologists, historians and classicists . . . The result was that very few ethnic or racial minorities attended Harvard College. In recent years *Harvard College has*

2. *Grutter v. Bollinger*

In *Grutter*, the Court evaluated the constitutionality of a University of Michigan Law School admissions policy that sought to achieve student body diversity, in compliance with *Bakke*.

Michigan Law School received more than 3,500 applications for an entering class of approximately 350 students. In recognizing the value of diversity, the law school sought a mix of students with varying backgrounds and experiences, with the Court noting that the hallmark of the admission policy “is its focus on academic ability coupled with the flexible assessment of applicants’ talents, experiences, and potential ‘to contribute to the learning of those around them.’”²⁷⁸ The petitioner was a white Michigan resident who was denied admission to the law school. She subsequently filed suit, alleging the admissions policy discriminated against her on the basis of race, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection Clause.

In relying on *Bakke*, and again emphasizing the importance of diversity on college campuses, the *Grutter* Court reasoned:

We have long recognized that, given the important purpose of public education and the expansive freedoms of speech and thought associated with the university environment, universities occupy a special niche in our constitutional tradition . . . In announcing the principle of student body diversity as a compelling state interest, Justice Powell invoked our cases recognizing a constitutional dimension, grounded in the First Amendment of educational autonomy: ‘The freedom of a university to make its own judgments as to education includes the selection of its student body . . . From this premise, Justice Powell reasoned that by claiming ‘the right to select those students who will contribute the most to the ‘robust exchange

expounded the concept of diversity to include students from disadvantaged economic, racial, and ethnic groups. Harvard College now recruits not only Californians or Louisianans but also blacks and Chicanos and other minority students.

Bakke, 438 U.S. at 322 (emphasis added).

²⁷⁸ *Grutter*, 539 U.S. at 315.

of ideas,’ a university ‘seek[s] to achieve a goal that is of paramount importance in the fulfillment of its mission.’²⁷⁹

In therefore evaluating the admissions policy’s racial considerations under strict level scrutiny, and concluding the law school actually considered all “pertinent elements of diversity,” the Court found the policy constitutional, while simultaneously suggesting race-based considerations must sunset in the not-so-distant future.²⁸⁰

3. *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*

In *Fisher*, the Court again examined the issue of race consideration to achieve diversity—this time, as a single element in a higher education admission process. The *Fisher* Court recognized that although race was not itself assigned a numerical value for each applicant to the University of Texas, the institution had committed itself to increasing racial minority enrollment on campus, referring to its goal as a “critical mass.”²⁸¹ Abigail Fisher, who was Caucasian, was one of 29,501 applicants for the 2008 entering class. 12,843 applicants were offered admission and 6,715 accepted and enrolled. Ms. Fisher’s application was denied and she subsequently filed suit.

After the Supreme Court’s rulings in *Grutter* and *Gratz v. Bollinger*,²⁸² the University of Texas began expressly considering race in its admissions process. The *Fisher* Court relied on *Grutter* to emphasize the importance of diversity in higher education and distinguished affirmative action from any policy aimed at redressing past discrimination. The Court wrote,

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 329 (internal citations omitted).

²⁸⁰ See *ibid.*, 341-43.

²⁸¹ *Fisher*, 133 S.Ct. at 2415.

²⁸² In contrast to *Grutter*, the *Gratz v. Bollinger* Court invalidated the University of Michigan’s undergraduate admissions policy which automatically awarded points to applicants from certain racial minorities. See, generally, *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 539 U.S. 244 (2003).

The attainment of a diverse student body . . . serves values beyond race alone, including enhanced classroom dialogue and the lessening of racial isolation and stereotypes. The academic mission of a university is ‘a special concern of the First Amendment.’ . . . Part of ‘the business of a university is to provide that atmosphere which is most conducive to speculation, experiment, and creation’ and this in turn leads to the question of who may be admitted to study.²⁸³

In therefore again validating affirmative action, another attempt at civil reconciliation, the Supreme Court expressly identified the value of diversity in an educational environment. The same ethic should apply to the church, another social institutional where people interact with one another and can presumably learn from their interactions that God shows no partiality among people (Acts 10:34).

4. Can the Church be a Place of Diversity and Inclusion and an Exemplar for Society-at-Large?

With the foregoing cases as a backdrop, the Supreme Court’s current composition suggests the future of affirmative action is bleak.²⁸⁴ In considering the importance of diversity, however—as exemplified by the majority opinion in *Fisher*—affirmative action’s anticipated sunset creates a rare opportunity for the church to demonstrate inclusivity and cultural competency that can be an exemplar for diversity and inclusion in society-at-large. Christena Cleveland writes, “The voices in the world have become increasingly diverse and

²⁸³ *Fisher*, 133 S.Ct. at 2418 (internal citations omitted).

²⁸⁴ On October 6, 2018, after arguably the most politically polarizing Supreme Court confirmation process in history, Trump’s conservative nominee, Brett Kavanaugh, officially became an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court. Sheryl Gay Stolberg, “Kavanaugh is Sworn in After Close Confirmation Vote in Senate,” *The New York Times* (Oct. 6, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/06/us/politics/brett-kavanaugh-supreme-court.html>. On October 15, 2018, less than two weeks after Kavanaugh assumed office, *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College*, an affirmative action case challenging the admissions policies at Harvard University went to trial. Katie Reilly, “A Lawsuit by Asian-American Students Against Harvard Could End Affirmative Action As We Know It,” *Time* (Oct. 16, 2018), <http://time.com/5425147/harvard-affirmative-action-trial-asian-american-students>. An October 2019 news article indicates that, in relying on the Supreme Court’s precedent, Judge Allison D. Burroughs relied on Supreme Court precedent in ruling in Harvard’s favor, by writing in a 130-page opinion, “Harvard has demonstrated that no workable and viable race-neutral alternative would allow it to achieve a diverse student body while still maintaining its standards of academic excellence.” Colleen Walsh, “Judge Upholds Harvard’s Admission’s Policy: Ruling Finds that College Does Not Discriminate,” *The Harvard Gazette* (Oct. 1, 2019), <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2019/10/judge-upholds-harvards-admissions-policy>.

interconnected; churches should be ready to welcome and engage individuals who represent all aspects of this diversity.”²⁸⁵ Such an inclusive embrace is the ministry of reconciliation that was left to the church (2 Cor. 5:16-19).

In seeing value in a place of diversity and inclusion, where humans can grow by being in community with the proverbial Other, I argue that diversity is uniformly good, with respect to human interaction, because of the way humans learn from one another. “Research shows that sharing an experience with another person—sometimes called ‘I-sharing’—causes people to feel a profound sense of connection with others, even others who are otherwise dissimilar. Even brief, seemingly inconsequential experiences can help you connect with others.”²⁸⁶ Moreover, as relevant studies show, “diverse groups, when formulated effectively, and when people have taken the time to learn to understand one another, communicate and work together effectively and produce better results with higher productivity and more creative problem solving.”²⁸⁷

Furthermore, in addressing *social diversity*—groups with varied membership, based on race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation—Katherine Phillips writes, “*Diversity enhances creativity*. It encourages the search for novel information and perspectives, leading to better decision making and problem solving. Diversity can improve the bottom line of companies and lead to unfettered discoveries and breakthrough innovations. *Even simply being exposed to*

²⁸⁵ Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ*, 42.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁸⁷ Howard J. Ross, *Re-Inventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers., Inc., 2011), 24 (citing Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007)).

diversity can change the way you think.”²⁸⁸ Moreover, in *The Wisdom of Crowds*, James Surowiecki argues that diverse groups of people make better decisions than individuals or homogeneous groups, with: (1) cognition problems—those that will have definite solutions; (2) coordination problems—those that require members of a group to coordinate their behavior with one another; and (3) cooperation problems—those involving the challenge of getting people to work together.²⁸⁹ The literature, therefore, supports the assertion that diversity is a good thing. This premise will be more developed in the succeeding and final chapter, as it relates to the church.

Consider also the opposite of diversity, in an ecclesial context, while simultaneously remembering the Supreme Court’s logic in *Fisher*. In citing former Presbyterian minister Gerald Tritle’s applied research on groupthink, Cleveland writes:

According to Tritle, church leadership teams that make decisions in a homogeneous vacuum are more likely to make less-informed decisions while perceiving that their decision is superior to those of other groups. The perception that their decision is morally superior to those of other groups gives them license to adopt a narcissistic, defensive and inflexible stance that makes it nearly impossible for them to achieve unity with other cultural groups in the body of Christ.²⁹⁰

Accordingly, if the church can model *Fisher* by creating a space for productive dialogue, along with an atmosphere of diversity, inclusion and cultural competency, the church will be well on the way to fulfilling her ministry of reconciliation.

²⁸⁸ Katherine W. Phillips, “How Diversity Makes Us Smarter: Being Around People Who Are Different From Us Makes Us More Creative, More Diligent and Harder-Working,” *Scientific American* (Oct. 1, 2014), <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-diversity-makes-us-smarter> (emphasis added).

²⁸⁹ See, generally, James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Anchor Books/Random House, 2004), xvii-xviii.

²⁹⁰ Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ*, 41.

Furthermore, Perkins also argues, based on select scriptures, that *reconciliation in the church* looks like *diversity in the church* and *diversity in the church* was always part of God's plan.

From the beginning of Scripture to the end, the message of unity and diversity in the family of God is powerful. Unity was sown into the very fabric of creation: from one man, Adam, all of humankind was created.

But this unity was to be reflected through *great diversity*. There are hints of the vision sprinkled through the Old Testament, signs that God was going to graft outsiders into His family, creating a multicolored body. God was beginning to graft outsiders like Ruth, Rahab, and others to show that though the people of Israel were His chosen people, He intended to spread the tent far and wide—that He intended to make, out of many peoples, one family of God.

I'll suggest that the *issues of justice, diversity, and reconciliation are not extra add-ons that the church can opt out of as a matter of personal preference. They are an essential part of the gospel.*²⁹¹

Diversity is therefore not only good for human interactions; it is also part of God's vision for the body of Christ.

Regretfully, however, the consequence of civil reconciliation and the progressive politics of the Civil Rights Movement has been a push-back where neither the church or society-at-large have come closer together. Instead, they have been driven farther apart by a fusion of white evangelicals and right-wing politics. In partially explaining this divide, while also addressing religion and America's political realignment, Abramowitz writes:

Since 1980, when the Republican Party first adopted a plank in its national platform calling for the repeal of the Supreme Court's *Roe v. Wade* decision . . . the divide between Democrats and Republicans over cultural issues has been growing. Seeing an opportunity to win over a large bloc of previously Democratic or uncommitted voters, Republican leaders starting with Ronald Reagan have aggressively courted white religious conservatives. Democratic leaders have responded by pursuing the support of college-educated, secular, and culturally

²⁹¹ Perkins, *One Blood*, 19-20 (emphasis added).

liberal voters. The result has been a growing religious divide between Republican and Democratic voters . . .²⁹²

I will now turn to the sociopolitical and religious circumstances that united white evangelicals and the Republican Party, before asking whether this alliance is severable.

III A Response to Success: The Southern Strategy Fusion of White Evangelicals and the Republican Party

The expression “evangelical Christian,” is often used in political commentary without clarifying who are “evangelicals.” Aside from an occasional reference to Reagan, commentators don’t explain how evangelicals formed such a partisan alliance with the Republican Party. Here, however, I attempt to identify evangelical voters, trace their relatively recent partisan allegiance, and raise the issue of whether that alliance is now severable, in moving the church toward reconciliation.

Slaughter and Gutenson highlight the often-negative perceptions of evangelicals that drive many millennials away from the church and organized religion. They argue that many Americans, under the age of 30, associate evangelicalism as being anti-gay, judgmental, and hypocritical.²⁹³ They also admit that these sentiments are likely reflective of the current time, when evangelicalism has been so closely associated with the Religious Right.²⁹⁴ It is this influence that William Barber squarely attacks in his forward to Wilson-Hartgrove’s *Reconstructing the Gospel*.

So-called white evangelicals . . . have dominated public discourse about religion in America for my entire adult life. They have insisted that faith is not political, except when it comes to prayer in school, abortion, homosexuality, and property rights. They have overlooked the more than 2,500 verses in Scripture that have to

²⁹² Abramowitz, *The Great Alignment*, 53.

²⁹³ See, generally, Slaughter & Gutenson, *Highjacked*, 8.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

do with love, justice, and care for the poor, and they have tried to make Jesus an honorary member of the NRA.²⁹⁵

It is therefore important to recognize that the current, controversial perceptions of evangelicals are not what evangelical Christianity represented just a few decades ago.

In *The Color of Compromise*, Tisby reminds readers what evangelicalism looked like only 40-years ago, before the rise of the Religious Right, a politically conservative movement organized to respond to the United States' liberal turn during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement.

Evangelicalism in America exploded during the 1970s and 1980s. The 'Jesus Movement' inspired a generation of college-aged Christians to devote their lives to religion. President Jimmy Carter described himself as a 'born again' Christian and taught Bible study at his church. Newly formed evangelical megachurches like Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in Orange County, started cropping up. Hal Lindsey's book *The Late Great Planet Earth*, based on a literal interpretation of biblical end-times prophecies, sold twenty-eight million copies. Evangelicals had so captured national attention that *Newsweek* magazine dubbed 1976 'The Year of the Evangelical.'²⁹⁶

As recent as the late 1970s, therefore, there was nothing "controversial" about being evangelical.

(A) So, Who Are Evangelical Christians Anyway?

In a literal context, "The Greek word *euangelos* from which 'evangelism' stems is normally translated as 'gospel' in English Bibles. The prefix *eu* means good and *angelos* means news, so the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ."²⁹⁷ Moreover, in *The Making of Evangelicalism*, Balmer shares, "The term *evangelical*, at its root, refers to the gospel—the 'good news'—of the New Testament and, more specifically, to the four evangelists: Matthew,

²⁹⁵ William J. Barber, II, Foreword in *Reconstructing the Gospel*, 1.

²⁹⁶ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 153-54 (internal citations omitted).

²⁹⁷ Scott J. Jones, *The Evangelistic Love of God & Neighbor: A Theology of Witness & Discipleship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 23.

Mark, Luke and John.”²⁹⁸ Balmer also informs that Martin Luther’s sixteenth century “rediscovery of the gospel” gave the term and its usage a distinctly Protestant cast.²⁹⁹ As this faction of Protestantism developed in the United States, *American evangelism* derived from an eighteenth century confluence of Scots-Irish Presbyterianism, Continental Pietism, and the vestiges of New England Puritanism.³⁰⁰

Further, in generalizing three tenants of American evangelicalism, Balmer identifies, “an embrace of the Holy Bible as inspired and God’s revelation to humanity, a belief in the centrality of a conversion or ‘born again’ experience, and the impulse to evangelize or bring others to the faith.”³⁰¹ Indeed, in *Divided by Faith*, Emerson and Smith offer similarly descriptive terms:

In contrast to those who might sight human reason, personal experience, tradition, or individual preference as conclusive authorities for truth, evangelicals hold that the final, ultimate authority is the Bible. Stemming from this, evangelicals believe that Christ died for the salvation of all, and that anyone who accepts Christ as the one way to eternal life will be saved. This act of faith is often called being ‘born again’ and is associated with a spirituality, and often more broadly, transformed life. And of course, true to their name, evangelicals believe in the importance of sharing their faith, or evangelizing.³⁰²

These characteristics are arguably consistent with modern day connotations of evangelicalism.

Notwithstanding these common characteristics, however, evangelicalism is not static. It is diverse, malleable, and has changed with changing times.³⁰³ Evangelicalism broadly includes

²⁹⁸ Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 2 (emphasis in original).

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ See *ibid.*

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Emerson & Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 3.

³⁰³ As a point in noting the flexibility of evangelicalism, impliedly highlighting its ability to evolve, as it has, over time, Balmer writes:

One of the reasons evangelicalism is so pliable is that, unlike other religious traditions, it is not (for the most part) bound by ecclesiastical hierarchies, creedal formulas, or liturgical rubrics. For

“fundamentalists, Pentecostals, holiness people, charismatics, the sanctified tradition, neoevangelicals, various ethnic groups, and on and on.”³⁰⁴ To therefore understand how the diversity of evangelicalism changed and became so closely associated with Republican Party politics, it is important to note four distinct periods of evolution.

In the age of the Awakenings—the First Great Awakening and the Second Great Awakening—evangelicals dramatically revised their soteriology (theology of salvation). Although there were principled reasons for this shift, a web of demographic sociological, and political changes must also be considered. What emerged early in the nineteenth century was a theology that fit the temper of the times, an assurance to people who had only recently taken their *political* destiny into their own hands that they controlled their *religious* destiny as well.

These early nineteenth-century evangelicals, it turned out, believed not only in the perfectibility of individuals but in the perfectibility of society itself, so they set about the enterprise of constructing a millennial kingdom here on earth and, more particularly, here in America.

By the waning decades of the nineteenth century, however, in the face of urbanization, industrialization, and the influx of non-Protestant immigrants, evangelicals faced a second quandary: retain their vision of social reform or adopt an alternative theology, something called dispensational premillennialism, that would effectively absolve them from the task of improving society.³⁰⁵

In further chronicling evangelicalism’s evolution in the United States, Balmer also writes of how the periods after the First and Second Great Awakenings led to the current day.

[T]he third turning point for evangelicals followed inexorably from the second and had the effect of deepening evangelicalism’s alienation from broader society. The adoption of premillennialism late in the nineteenth century, a theology of

many evangelicals, even the word *tradition* has a negative valence; it suggests a kind of stultifying, calcified rigor that somehow, evangelicals believe, inhibits a true and dynamic embrace of the faith.

Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 3 (emphasis in original).

³⁰⁴ Ibid. Further, Emerson and Smith also share a caveat with respect to the diversity of evangelical Christians in writing, “Evangelicals come from all ethnic and racial backgrounds, but nearly 90 percent of Americans who call themselves evangelicals are white.” Emerson & Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 3.

³⁰⁵ Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 4-5 (emphasis in original).

despair, had turned evangelicals inward as they felt more and more estranged from the dominant culture.

[T]he evangelical subculture [,] by the 1970s[,] provided the platform for evangelical reengagement with the broader society, the final turning point. The initial, albeit tentative, embrace of Jimmy Carter, a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, realigned evangelicalism with the political and social agenda of antebellum evangelicals, who invariably took the part of those on the margins of society. But radical turnabout late in the 1970s shifted evangelicals away from their roots and into the ambit of right-wing political conservatism.³⁰⁶

This last shift can be traced to Nixon's southern strategy in the late 60s and early 70s, as well as Reagan's political charisma in the 80s. It begs the question of what happened to turn the political allegiance of such a powerful *religious* group toward the politics of *non-religious* causes?

(B) How Evangelical Christianity Became Aligned with the Religious Right

To understand how evangelicalism became so closely associated with Republican Party politics, it is important to conceptualize three post-World War II sociopolitical shifts that were closely aligned with "revivalist nationalism." After detailing Billy Graham's famous 1949 Los Angeles crusade as a foundation, Daniel Hummel chronicles these shifts by arguing:

Since World War II, revivalist nationalism has maintained a central place in evangelical Christian nationalism. At the same time, revival has undergone a massive conceptual shift, making it more conducive to national politics. There are at least three phases in this outline of revivalist nationalism . . . [Billy] Graham's revivalism, expressed in crusades after World War II, offered an idealistic conception of politics and nationalism . . . believing in a social ethic centered on the individual soul and free will, and predicated on the universal commonality of divinely created humans . . . By the 1960s, this idealism gave way to a realism that 'old fashioned' revival could not alone renew the nation. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, promoted more explicitly and directly a political message in his massive revival campaigns of the 1970s. Bright added to his revivalist nationalism a concern for party politics and the political process and the Christian injunction to 'help elect men and women of God in every position of influence.' Finally, [Jerry] Falwell took revivalist nationalism in a new direction

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 5-6.

by reducing focus on the eternal fate of individual souls—the singular focus of Graham’s early crusades.³⁰⁷

The last of the three shifts, closely associated with Falwell and the Religious Right, welcomed Reagan and helped create the fusion of partisan politics and evangelical Christianity.

In documenting the phenomenon of evangelicals’ allegiance to Republican candidates that originated after passage of the Voting Rights Act, Slaughter and Gutenson write,

White evangelical Protestant churches have undergone a dramatic transformation since the mid-1960s. Just before passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, white evangelical Protestants self-identified as 68% Democratic, 25% Republican, and 7% Independent—making up a significant part of what was referred to at the time as ‘the solid Democratic South.’³⁰⁸

In further documenting this shift, while impliedly referencing Nixon and expressly identifying Reagan as catalysts for change, they go on to share,

While Democratic identification fell fairly steadily throughout the 1970s, it wasn’t until the presidency of Ronald Regan, beginning in 1981, that more white evangelical Protestants than not began to identified their political party as the GOP.

The shift in partisanship with the Reagan election was fairly dramatic—with white evangelical Protestants serving as one of the principal drivers in what political scientists have called ‘the great white switch,’ Reagan’s campaign—during which he famously courted the evangelical vote by saying, ‘I know you can’t endorse me, but I endorse you’—was the watershed moment that marked the beginning of white evangelical Protestants becoming a bedrock constituency of the Republican Party.³⁰⁹

This perspective is indeed consistent with Balmer’s argument that, “No one can deny the political influence of the Religious Right or the leaders’ proximity to powerful politicians. Since

³⁰⁷ Daniel Hummel, “Revivalist Nationalism Since World War II: From ‘Wake up, America!’ to ‘Make America Great Again,’” *Religions* 7.11 (Nov. 1, 2016), <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/7/11/128>, pages 2-3 (internal citations omitted).

³⁰⁸ Slaughter & Gutenson, *Highjacked*, 4 (internal citations omitted).

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.* (internal citations omitted).

the 1980s, politically conservative evangelicals have supplied the Republican Party with the foot soldiers that labor unions once provided for the Democratic Party.”³¹⁰

Insofar as Carter made evangelicalism fashionable as a 1976 presidential candidate, drawing media attention to a previously overlooked voting bloc, Reagan worked to gain evangelical support in the 1980 election, as Carter’s political popularity plummeted because of matters including the Iran hostage crisis. Referencing *Newsweek*’s anointing 1976 as “The Year of the Evangelical,” in *One Nation Under God*, Kevin Kruse writes,

But few appreciated the importance of this development until those same supporters started to turn on Carter late in his term. In the lead-up to the 1980 election, a Gallop poll revealed an electorate in the midst of a religious revival. More than 80 percent of Americans accepted the divinity of Jesus Christ, almost half professed confidence in the inerrancy of the Holy Bible, and most surprisingly, nearly a third identified themselves as having a ‘born-again’ experience of their own . . .

Reagan resolved to win the votes of this newly discovered ‘religious right’ at all costs . . . Reagan quickly made common cause with leaders on the religious right such as Jerry Falwell, head of the Moral Majority organization, and worked to convert rank-and-file religious conservatives to his campaign.³¹¹

Most famously, however, Kruse also describes Regan’s climatic August 1980 address to the National Affairs Briefing of the Religious Roundtable in Dallas, Texas by writing:

Some fifteen thousand evangelical and fundamentalist ministers, including Falwell, [Pat] Robertson, and the head of the Southern Baptist Convention, were on hand, hoping they might finally find a champion in Reagan. He did not disappoint . . . In a line that was scripted by his hosts, Regan declared his loyalty to the audience. ‘I know you can’t endorse me,’ he told them. ‘But I want you to know I endorse you and what you are doing.’ Duly impressed, religious conservatives rallied around him and when Regan swept to victory that November, they were happy to claim the credit.³¹²

³¹⁰ Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism*, 72.

³¹¹ Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 277-78.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 278. Kruse and Julian Zeiler also provide further context to understand Regan’s political union with evangelical voters.

This 1980s fusion of piety and political partisanship began moving evangelical Christians toward becoming a predictable, bedrock constituency of the Republican Party.³¹³ Further mobilized by an almost united interest in overturning *Roe v. Wade*, this same fusion supported Trump's extremism in the 2016 presidential election.³¹⁴

(C) Can Anything Separate Evangelicals from Trump and Blind Political Allegiance?

In order for evangelical Christians to separate from “groupthink” rank-and-file politics and move toward reconciliation, it would take not only a major event, but major contradictions would also have to be made apparent. Trump's *personal contradictions*, much more so than any of his off-color politics, have seemingly started a break. Consider a contrast between the two.

1. Trump's Abrasive Politics and Divisive Policies

From a political perspective, Kruse and Zelner describe “The Trump Phenomenon,” in writing about political events leading up to the 2016 presidential election.

After a decade of work laying the foundations for change, the conservative constellations that had come to be known as the New Right and the Religious Right coalesced in Ronald Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign. The GOP convention made it clear that Reagan . . . had been warmly embraced by the forces of religious conservatism . . . ‘There is no formal Christian caucus at the Republican National Convention,’ a reporter marveled. ‘None is needed. Overlap between the Reagan campaign and evangelical Christians is substantial.’

Kruse & Zelner, *Fault Lines*, 104.

³¹³ In elaborating on this evangelical and Republican coalition, Abromowitz argues:

Building on a growing alliance with religious conservatives of all faiths and evangelical Protestants in particular, the Republican Party has become increasingly associated with policies that include restrictions on access to abortion and opposition to same-sex marriage and other legal rights for homosexuals . . . Although the 2012 election was supposed to be all about jobs and the economy . . . [a]ccording to the national exit poll, white born-again or evangelical Christians make up 26-percent of the electorate, and despite any reservations they may have had about supporting a Mormon, they voted for Mitt Romney over Barack Obama by 78 percent to 21 percent.

Abromowitz, *The Great Alignment*, 10-11.

³¹⁴ Sarah Pulliam Bailey, “White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Poll Shows,” *The Washington Post* (Nov. 9, 2016) (“Exit polls show white evangelical voters voted in high numbers for Donald Trump, 80 to 16 percent . . .”), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump>.

‘The candidate’s angry rhetoric—on subjects like undocumented Mexican immigrants, political correctness and ‘thugs’ in Baltimore—has made his run a magnet for disaffected supporters and for identity politics protesters determined to steal the spotlight . . .’ At an October 2015 rally in Richmond, Virginia, Trump supporters ripped signs from Latino immigration activists; one spit in a protestor’s face. In November, an African American protestor at a Birmingham rally was punched, kicked, and choked. At a December event in Las Vegas, when a black protestor was being forcibly removed by security, Trump supporters screamed ‘light the motherfucker on fire!’ Rather than try to reduce the violence, Trump rationalized it. After the Birmingham incident, for instance, he defended the crowd’s assault on the protestor, saying ‘maybe he *should* have been roughed up, because it was absolutely disgusting what he was doing.’³¹⁵

Accordingly, Trump’s abrasive and dehumanizing politics are seemingly immaterial for his political supporters.

In addition to Trump’s politics, however, his policies have also proven xenophobic, in going to the very heart of divisions in America, as the very opposite of reconciliation. He campaigned on building a U.S./Mexico border wall, after calling Mexicans criminals and rapists.³¹⁶ Further, early on in his presidency, Trump also stoked emotions by his prejudicial and divisive rhetoric regarding immigration policy. As the authors of *Identity Crisis* note, Trump’s penchant for driving divisions is unequivocally evident.

It was not quite six months into his presidency, and he was looking at a list of how many immigrants had received visas to enter the United States in 2017. He had campaigned on limiting immigration, and now he thought the United States was still letting in too many immigrants—and from the wrong places. Trump called Afghanistan, which had sent 2,500 immigrants, a terrorist haven. He said that the 15,000 immigrants from Haiti ‘all have AIDS.’ He said that once the 40,000 Nigerian immigrants had lived in the United States, they would never ‘go back to their huts.’ Trump’s staff proceeded to argue about who was to blame for admitting these immigrants.

³¹⁵ Kruse & Zelizer, *Fault Lines*, 335 (emphasis in original)(internal citations omitted).

³¹⁶ “Michelle Ye Hee Lee, “Donald Trump’s False Comments Connecting Mexican Immigrants and Crime,” *The Washington Post* (July 8, 2015), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/07/08/donald-trumps-false-comments-connecting-mexican-immigrants-and-crime>.

The White House denied that Trump had made those remarks, but seven months later, in January 2018, similar remarks surfaced. This time Trump was meeting with members of Congress in the Oval Office to discuss a possible immigration reform deal. When the topic of protecting immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and Africa came up, Trump said, ‘Why are we having all of these people from shithole countries here?’ The White House did not dispute the facts initially, but later two Republican senators who were at the meeting said they had heard Trump say ‘shithouse’ not ‘shithole.’ Of course, the distinction between ‘house’ and ‘hole’ was not exactly the source of the controversy.³¹⁷

Although Trump’s politics *and* policies are therefore the antithesis of anything associated with reconciliation, evangelical Christians now have reason to question his character.

2. Trump’s Personal Contradictions

In the wake of his historic December 18, 2019 impeachment by the U.S. House of Representatives, a scathing Trump spoke at a political rally in Battle Creek, Michigan. He sarcastically referenced Michigan’s Democratic Representative Debbie Dingell, the widow and successor of former representative John Dingell, before implying the late congressman was “looking up” at everything from Hell.³¹⁸ Trump’s comments drew criticism, even from Republicans.³¹⁹ In the political aftermath, significant issue was raised as to whether Trump’s character would allow evangelical voters to continue supporting him.

In writing to what is arguably the most core constituency of evangelical Christians, the editor of *Christianity Today*, a magazine founded by the late and revered evangelistic crusader,

³¹⁷ John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck, *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 201-02 (internal citations omitted).

³¹⁸ Associated Press, “Trump Takes Swipe at House Lawmaker’s Dead Husband, Implying he’s in Hell During Michigan Rally. The White House Says the President was ‘Just Riffing,’” *The Chicago Tribune*, (Dec. 19, 2019), <https://www.chicagotribune.com/midwest/ct-donald-trump-john-debbie-dingell-20191219-6rveqe42newrkcnm52dr6zai-story.html>; see also Caroline Kelly & Allie Malloy, “Trump Implies that the Late Rep. John Dingell is ‘Looking Up’ From Hell,” CNN (Dec. 19, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/18/politics/trump-rally-john-dingell-hell/index.html>.

³¹⁹ Kadia Goba, “Republicans Said it was ‘Inappropriate’ for Trump to Attack a Member of Congress and Her Late Husband,” *Buzzfeed* (Dec. 19, 2019), <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/kadiagoba/republicans-inappropriate-trump-dingell-hell-comment>.

Billy Graham, squarely attacked Trump's morality and called for him to be removed from office.

In referencing Trump's 2019 impeachment hearings in the House of Representatives, Mark Galli writes:

But the facts in this instance are unambiguous: the president of the United States attempted to use his political power to coerce a foreign leader to harass and discredit one of the president's political opponents. This is not only a violation of the Constitution; more importantly, it is profoundly immoral.

The reason many are not shocked by this is that this president has dumbed down the idea of morality in his administration. He has hired and fired a number of people who are now convicted criminals. He himself has admitted to immoral actions in business and his relationship with women, about which he remains proud . . .

Trump's evangelical supporters have pointed to his Supreme Court nominees, his defense of religious liberty, and his stewardship of the economy . . . as achievements that justify their support of the president. We believe the impeachment hearings have made it absolutely clear, in a way the Mueller investigation did not, that President Trump has abused his authority for personal gain and betrayed his constitutional oath. *The impeachment hearings have illuminated the president's moral deficiencies for all to see . . .*

*To the many evangelicals who continue to support Mr. Trump in spite of his blackened moral record, we might say this: Remember who you are and whom you serve. Consider how your justification of Mr. Trump influences your witness to your Lord and Savior. Consider what an unbelieving world will say if you continue to brush off Mr. Trump's immoral words and behavior in the cause of political expediency . . .*³²⁰

This unequivocal call for evangelicals to withdraw their support from Trump may be the first sign of the unraveling of a closely bound alliance that has clearly existed for more than 40-years.

Inasmuch as Galli's editorial shows a division among evangelicals, as it relates to Trump's morality, other evangelical leaders immediately jumped to Trump's defense.³²¹ In

³²⁰ Mark Galli, "Trump Should Be Removed From Office," *Christianity Today* (Dec. 19, 2019) (emphasis added), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2019/december-web-only/trump-should-be-removed-from-office.html>.

³²¹ After *Christianity Today's* call for Trump's removal from office, other evangelical leaders, including Ralph Reed and Franklin Graham, the son of *Christianity Today's* founder, Billy Graham, responded by announcing their support of Trump. See, generally, Elizabeth Dias and Jeremy W. Peters, "Evangelical Leaders Close Ranks with

moving forward, however, while looking critically at whether the fusion of Republican Party politics and white evangelicalism resulting from Nixon’s southern strategy is ever severable, two schools of thought emerge. One is that Republicans and white evangelicals might “need each other,” given the United States’ changing demographics. In interviewing Robert Jones, Dias and Peters write, “‘Because they are a third of the Republican base, Trump needs white evangelical Protestants to get elected,’ said Robert P. Jones, chief executive of the Public Religion Research Institute. ‘And because white evangelicals see themselves as a shrinking minority, in both racial and religious terms, they need Trump.’”³²² The other school of thought is that the unearthed division will continue to manifest in years to come, based on younger evangelicals’ social exposure.

Many young evangelicals . . . are more socially liberal on issues like same-sex marriage and troubled by Trump administration policies like separating migrant families at the border and denying climate change.

Evangelicals who are troubled by the president’s conduct said they feared he had done long-term damage to their cause, and that the lack of pushback had only hurt them more, especially with young people.³²³

Evangelical Christianity, just like other religious factions within the church, *is not* monolithic. Perhaps, therefore, in addition to Trump’s personal conduct, some of his policies have created ethical factions among evangelical Christians.

Trump After Scathing Editorial: Christianity Today’s Call for Trump’s Removal Gave Voice to his Evangelical Critics. But they remain a minority in a Political Movement that Mr. Trump Has Reshaped in his Own Mold,” *N.Y. Times* (Dec. 20, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/us/politics/christianity-today-trump-evangelicals.html>.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid.

IV Conclusion

This chapter explored the response to civil reconciliation in the Civil Rights Movement. As a result of the 1960's most empirically successful measures of success, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the government's controversial attempts at diversity and inclusion in the form of affirmative action, an unlikely alliance began to develop. The Republican Party's southern strategy capitalized on an anti-progress sentiment by creating a fusion between disgruntled whites and evangelical Christians. Over the course of four decades, this unlikely alliance became a bedrock constituency of the Republican Party.

Although initially created because of social resentment, the evangelical Christian/Republican Party alliance was solidified by "morality" in opposing apportionment. In other words, although Richard Nixon's "law and order" political rhetoric in the late 60s helped create the alliance, it was solidified by Ronald Reagan's deliberate efforts to make evangelicals a solid Republican Party voting bloc by opposing *Roe v. Wade*. That alliance led Reagan to victory in 1980, over the incumbent Jimmy Carter. Moreover, as that same alliance has become even more solidified over almost 40-years, it led Donald Trump to victory over Hillary Clinton in 2016.

With the United States anything but united, it seems that the consequence of civil reconciliation has brought division to both society-at-large and the church. Although religious and social factions have been united by identity politics, the depth of divisions in the United States was unearthed by Trump's "Make American Great Again" narrative. The question now becomes, in light of Trump's damaging personal conduct, whether the first major call for a break between evangelicals and Trump can result in a return to the ecclesial unity of diversity manifested in early church. Trump's politics, policies, and personal transgressions have created question as to whether the Republican alliance with evangelicals has, at least partially, been

severed. If young evangelicals are truly disturbed by the immorality of policies like separating migrant children from their families, opposition to same-sex marriage, and denial of climate change, question exists as to whether the Religious Right's partnership with evangelicals will end in the not-so-distant future.

Although the church has never been monolithic, in light of such polarized factions, I ask the question: Can the church embrace a theology of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence that she might be an exemplar for the secular world? I optimistically explore this possibility in the following and concluding chapter, "Where Do We Go From Here?"

Chapter 5: Where Do We Go From Here?: A Call for the Church to Return to its Apostolic Era Embrace of Diversity and Inclusion

[T]he line of progress is never straight. For a period a movement may follow a straight line and then it encounters obstacles and the path bends. It is like curving around a mountain when you are approaching a city. Often it feels as though you were moving backward, and you lose sight of your goal; but in fact you are moving ahead, and soon you will see the city again, closer by.

We are encountering just such an experience today. The inevitable counterrevolution that succeeds every period of progress is taking place. Failing to understand this is a normal process of development . . .³²⁴

I Introduction

The preceding four chapters have all been, in one aspect or another, about reconciliation. More specifically, they have outlined a reconciliation progression, qualifying the term in a three-fold capacity: (1) *salvific*—humanity being reconciled in relationship with God, *through Jesus* (“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”) (Rom. 5:10-11)); (2) *social*—humans being reconciled in relation with one another *because of Jesus* (“all of you [us] are one in Christ Jesus.”) (Gal. 3:28)); and (3) *civil*—a biblically-inspired derivative of social reconciliation and egalitarian-like ethic that motivates both clergy and laity to demand governmental redress for social ills (chapter 3).

In the last chapter, while illustrating the premise that “every action has a reaction,” I detailed how the progressive actions of civil reconciliation also led to counteractions in the form of an evangelical Christian and Republican Party fusion. This coalition was initiated by Richard Nixon’s southern strategy and solidified by Ronald Reagan’s alliance with the Religious Right.

³²⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010)[1968], 12-13.

Now, however, under the political governance of Donald Trump, this alliance has reached a highpoint of enmity, evidencing both internal divisions and a cognitive dissonance that is the anthesis of reconciliation, with the extreme “Make America Great Again” political narrative. Accordingly, in this fifth and final chapter, I ask the proverbial question, “Where Do We Go From Here?”, in calling the church universal to return to her apostolic origins of diversity and inclusion.

Martin Luther King, Jr.’s fourth and final book, *Where Do We Go From Here?*, presents a rhetorical question requiring introspective contemplation. The notion of “here” presupposes there was progress or advancement made from “back there.” In King’s case, the book was completed in 1967, after the progress of Civil Rights Movement—including his specific leadership with landmark legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and Voting Rights Act of 1965—enactments aimed at making the United States a more diverse and inclusive place for all people. Because King was assassinated in April 1968, however, he did not live to see the full fruits of his labor.

In this fifth chapter, I attempt to conclude in a synergetic fashion by drawing a parallel between the progress made toward diversity and inclusion, in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement, and a similar progress made in the church, during the apostolic era. I also look at what the church (*ekklesia*) is intended to look like and where she appears to be headed. In attempting to draw a nexus, I conceptually connect diversity, inclusion and cultural competence theories with a theological argument of God’s intention for the church.

If the Acts 2 and 10 narratives—parts of the church’s work in *social reconciliation*—have anything in common with the church’s civil rights era work toward *civil reconciliation*, there must be a common realization that, “All [people] are created equally, endowed by their

creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”³²⁵ In essence, therefore, if all peoples are equal in the sight of God—regardless of race or ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation, political affiliation or socioeconomic status—the Acts 10 narrative must again be lived out in the church because, “God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34-35).

Inasmuch as chapter 4 highlights Trump’s personal character flaws that caused some evangelicals to support his impeachment, according to a recent article in *The New York Times*, another line of division is that younger evangelicals disagree with Trump’s policies on immigration, opposition to gay marriage, and his negation of climate change and global warming.³²⁶ Moreover, although younger evangelicals remain more conservative than their nonevangelical Protestant counterparts, research shows their greatest break with older evangelicals seems to be in their support for matters like the environment and social welfare policies.³²⁷ Indeed, in surveying literature over a larger time period, Jeremiah Castle writes, “Over the past three presidential election cycles, a number of popular and journalistic accounts have suggested that young evangelicals are becoming more liberal on a variety of issues and may

³²⁵ The Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), available at <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>.

³²⁶ Elizabeth Dias and Jeremy W. Peters, “Evangelical Leaders Close Ranks with Trump After Scathing Editorial: Christianity Today’s Call for Trump’s Removal Gave Voice to his Evangelical Critics. But they remain a minority in a Political Movement that Mr. Trump Has Reshaped in his Own Mold,” *N.Y. Times* (Dec. 20, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/us/politics/christianity-today-trump-evangelicals.html> (describing younger evangelical voters lack of opposition to some of things that were socially polarizing issues to the previous generation).

³²⁷ Jeremiah Castle, “Subcultural Identity and the Evangelical Left: Comparing Liberal Young Evangelicals to Other Young Liberals,” in *The Evangelical Crackup?: The Future of the Evangelical-Republican Coalition*, eds. Paul A. Djupe and Ryan L. Claassen (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2018), 133.

be moving away from the GOP.”³²⁸ This presents an opportunity to move the very fractured church universal toward reconciliation, at least in concept.

Further, there are also lines of evangelical division with respect to the presumption of individual and collective rights. In elaborating on research findings in the wake of the 2016 presidential election, Andrew Lewis writes:

Evangelical leaders who opposed Trump often cited his intolerance for others, while those who endorsed him claimed that he was the most capable of defending evangelicals’ rights. Tolerance for others, and its importance, thus is a demarcation point dividing strong evangelical support for Trump and reluctant evangelical supporters or those who vowed never to support him (Never Trumpers).³²⁹

Accordingly, by asking, “Where Do We Go From Here?”, I attempt to move the church toward reconciliation by challenging the more “tolerant” evangelicals to move toward a theology of equality, diversity and inclusion that is rooted in the church’s apostolic origins, while simultaneously exploring biblical and practical conceptualizations of what God intended the church to look like, through a diversity and inclusion lens. As John Perkins writes in *One Blood*, “issues of justice, diversity, and reconciliation are not extra add-ones that the church can opt-out of as a matter of personal preference. They are an essential part of the gospel.”³³⁰

In connecting contemporary diversity and inclusion practices with the church’s apostolic origins, as a means to move the church toward reconciliation, consider Scott Page’s advocacy for diversity in organizations. In *The Difference*, Page writes from the premise that diversity is fundamentally good for organizational breadth, as he describes *identity diversity*—differences

³²⁸ Ibid., 124.

³²⁹ Andrew R. Lewis, “Divided Over Rights: Competing Evangelical Visions for Twenty-First Century America,” in *The Evangelical Crackup?: The Future of the Evangelical-Republican Coalition*, eds. Paul A. Djupe and Ryan L. Claassen (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 2018), 81.

³³⁰ John M. Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 19-20.

based on race and ethnicity—and *cognitive diversity*—differences based on background and training or life experiences—as being essential for problem solving.³³¹

In advocating for both, identity diversity *and* cognitive diversity, Page discusses *Grutter v. Bollinger*, the University of Michigan Law School affirmative action case highlighted in chapter 4. Page disagrees with Associate Justice Antonin Scalia’s dissenting opinion in *Grutter*, as Scalia presents a contradiction between identity diversity and cognitive diversity, arguing you can’t have a “super-duper” law school that is simultaneously racially diverse. Page rebuked Scalia’s logic by writing:

Diversity and super-duperness can go hand in hand: a great law school may require a diversity of perspectives, interpretations, heuristics, and predictive models. A great law school benefits from including people with diverse preference . . . So if we believe that differences in race, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, religion, sexual orientation, and so on correlate with cognitive diversity, then being super-duper *may* require some identity diversity. And, moreover, super-duperness may *always* require identity diversity, long after discrimination ends.³³²

Further, Page also insists that identity and cognitive diversity are essential for organizations like universities because universities prepare people to serve society through research and education. I argue that in addition to her salvific role, the church has a similar social function. When one considers the respective backgrounds of the original disciples Jesus called to ministry (cognitive diversity), as well as the ethnic and geographic backgrounds of those who responded to Peter’s call in beginning the church (identity diversity), I argue God intended the church to be diverse, too.

In calling on the church universal to return to her apostolic theology of equality, while also arguing that God intends for the church to be a place of diversity, inclusion, and welcome

³³¹ Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 2007), 12-18.

³³² *Ibid.*, 17 (emphasis in original).

for all, this final chapter proceeds in four parts. After Part One’s introductory overview, Part Two looks at God’s intention for the church, through a diversity and inclusion lens, by progressively exploring the scripturally-based concept that the *ekklesia* is a place of welcome for the proverbial “Other,” especially those “from every nation, from all tribes, and people’s and languages . . .” (Rev. 7:9).

To illustrate how God intends for the church to be a place of welcome, Part Two includes a scriptural progression that explores migration in the Old and New Testaments, culminating with the (identity) diversity of the church triumphant, in Revelation, and concluding with some leading diversity and inclusion perspectives on diverse organizations being better for long-term problem solving and creating sustainable solutions. If diversity is good for the church triumphant, it should also be good for the church militant.

Part Three then builds upon Part Two, looking at whether the current church is moving in the direction God would have her to go, by exploring church-based reconciliation. I look at the future of evangelical factions and argue that, notwithstanding evangelical’s overwhelming support for Trump’s extremism in 2016, and regardless of what results the 2020 election will produce, my literature review shows evangelicals are becoming *less separate* and *more tolerant* of the Other in their sociopolitical views. Accordingly, even though a complete break of the evangelical Christian/Republican Party coalition is unlikely, evangelicals’ comparatively recent advocacy for the rights of others strongly indicates evangelical Christians are embracing what Perkins calls *biblical reconciliation*: the removal of tension between parties and a return to loving relationships, through both racial and communal trends.³³³

³³³ Perkins, *One Blood*, 17, 28.

Insofar as “biblical reconciliation” removes tensions and returns parties to a loving relationship, in *Race*, Kameron Carter traces the anthesis of biblical reconciliation by forging arguments from Cornel West and Michael Foucault to posit that the problem of racism, in the modern state, results from Western Christianity’s attempts to isolate Jesus as separate from Christianity’s origins in Judaism.³³⁴ Carter writes, “modernity’s racial imagination has its genesis in the theological problem of Christianity’s quest to sever itself from its Jewish roots.”³³⁵ Similarly, in *The Christian Imagination*,³³⁶ Willie Jennings deliberately refrains from using the word “reconciliation,”³³⁷ choosing instead to focus on issues of race, space, and place by writing, “The disciples understood that the advent of Torah constituted social space in which God’s people would live together under divine command. The ongoing ministry of Jesus in the Spirit was found precisely in the drawing of peoples together around his words.”³³⁸

First John rebukes this sort of social enmity by making expressly clear, “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers and sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister who they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.” (1 John 4:20-21). Moreover, in espousing on this popular First John passage, and addressing the core ethic of what I term *social reconciliation*, Will Willimon writes:

In loving we are surprised to have the Other move from being a stranger or enemy to the status of sister or brother. In attempting to love the Other, we find ourselves

³³⁴ J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2008), 4-121.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

³³⁶ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

drawn closer to the God of love; we become as we profess. Love of neighbor validates that we are loving the true and living God rather than some godlet of our own concoction.³³⁹

The ability to engage in a ministry of welcome and give love to the proverbial Other—regardless of whether the distinguishing lines are based on race, ethnicity, social class, gender, sexual orientation, or political partisanship—goes to the heart of what the church’s ministry of reconciliation is all about (2 Cor. 5:18-19). Accordingly, Part Three concludes by looking at practical examples of how the church universal can move toward reconciliation, and be an exemplar for society-at-large.

Finally, to bring a synthesizing end to this work, Part Four serves as this final chapter’s conclusion. Part Four also deliberately refocuses attention on some of the biblically-based concepts of *social reconciliation*, previously detailed in chapter 2, as a means that may unite evangelicals and more mainline Christians in moving the church toward reconciliation.

II So, What Did God Intend for the Church to Look Like?

In order to answer the question, “What Did God Intended for the Church to Look Like?”, it’s not hard to begin with the premise that the church is and has been in a divided state. To illustrate this point of division, there is levity in looking at some of the church’s manmade divisions that are so diametrically opposed to what God’s vision for the church must be. Christena Cleveland addresses part of this frivolity in *Disunity in Christ*,³⁴⁰ illustrating the church universal’s fractured nature in a jocular way, as she retells Emo Phillip’s popular joke that *GQ* magazine named the 44th funniest joke of all time.

³³⁹ William H. Willimon, *Fear of the Other: No Fear in Love* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 11.

³⁴⁰ Christena Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013).

I was walking across a bridge one day and I saw a man standing on the edge, about to jump off. So I ran over and said, ‘Stop! Don’t do it!’

‘Why shouldn’t I?’ he asked.

‘Well, there’s so much to live for.’

‘Like what?’

‘Well, are you religious?’

He said yes.

I said, ‘Me too! Are you Christian or Buddhist?’

‘Christian.’

‘Me too! Are you Catholic or Protestant?’

‘Protestant’

‘Me to! Are you Episcopalian or Baptist?’

‘Baptist.’

‘Wow, me too! Are you Baptist Church of God or Baptist Church of the Lord?’

‘Baptist Church of God!’

‘Me too! Are you original Baptist Church of God or Reformed Baptist Church of God?’

‘Reformed Baptist Church of God!’

‘Me too! Are you reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation 1879, or Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation 1915?’

He said, ‘Reformed Baptist Church of God, reformation 1915!’

I said, ‘Die, heretic,’ and pushed him off.³⁴¹

Indeed, this jocular expression illustrates just how prone humans can be to focus on differences, rather than celebrating diversity. Here, in Part Two, I explore diversity (and reconciliation) from a scriptural perspective—looking at migration and the church triumphant—while urging the church universal to create what Howard Ross, in *ReInventing Diversity*, calls “organizational community,” a place that welcomes diversity, inclusivity, and cultural competence, through a variety of factors, including collaboration.³⁴²

³⁴¹Ibid., 32–33.

³⁴² Howard J. Ross, *ReInventing Diversity: Transforming Organizational Community to Strengthen People, Purpose, and Performance* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, 2011), 191-203.

(A) A Theology of Welcome: Scripture Progresses to Show God Intended the Church to Be a Place of Diversity and Inclusion

As a contrast to the underlying division at the heart of the foregoing joke, beginning with the Old Testament, the progression of scripture suggests God intended for *all* people to be welcome in what would become the *ekklesia*. In arguing from the premise that from one man, Adam, all humankind was created, Perkins writes,

There are hints of the vision sprinkled throughout the Old Testament, signs that God was going to graft outsiders into His family, creating a multicolored body. God was beginning to graft in outsiders like Ruth, Rahab, and others to show that though the people of Israel were his chosen people, he intended to spread the tent far and wide—that He intended to make, out of many peoples, one family of God.³⁴³

I argue the grafting Perkins describes occurred through migration. I therefore take this opportunity to engage in a scriptural exploration of migration, anchored in a theology of welcome for the proverbial Other. This is the “common personhood” Martin Luther King, Jr. referenced in the final days of the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott, when he spoke at Holt Street Baptist Church, reminding others that the boycott and its achievements *were not* the goal. King remarked, “The end is reconciliation, the end is redemption . . . the end is the creation of the beloved community.”³⁴⁴

In *Seeking Refuge*, the authors write from a Christocentric perspective in addressing immigration by arguing:

For those who profess to follow Jesus, our top authority on any topic—but particularly on a complex one—ought to be the Bible. For many evangelical Christians, though, refugees and immigration are thought of as political, economic, and cultural issues, rather than as a biblical concern. A recent LifeWay Research survey of American evangelical Christians found that just 12 percent

³⁴³ Perkins, *One Blood*, 19.

³⁴⁴ Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice, From the Civil Rights Movement to Today* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 1 (internal citations omitted).

said that they thought about immigration issues primarily from the perspective of the Bible.³⁴⁵

Accordingly, as an initial matter, I argue a theology of welcome is the appropriate response to America's immigration policies, insofar as immigrants *are not* treated in ways that are consistent with biblical teachings, as one means to move the church toward reconciliation. Indeed, as Glenn Utter writes, "Christian denominations express an openness to immigration of people from other countries and a willingness to help them succeed in the United States. In justifying a humane immigration policy, members note a fundamental Christian value that strangers be made welcome. They cite scripture in support of this position."³⁴⁶ This is of course the anthesis of immigration policies implemented by the Trump administration.³⁴⁷

As a starting point, before exploring scriptural examples of migration, as a basis for showing how God intended the church to be a place of diversity and inclusion, I believe it is prudent to first identify "immigrants," in the American contextualization.

Immigrants are typically classified as either documented or undocumented people who are nationals of another country but are living in the United States. Soerens and Yang write,

In any discussion about undocumented immigrants, it is important to remember that most foreign-born people in the United States have legal status. Of an estimated 44.7 million people born outside but living inside the United States, about twenty million are already naturalized US citizens, and roughly twelve million are Lawful Permanent Residents . . . [M]ost foreign-born individuals—about three out of four—are present lawfully. The rest of the immigrants currently in the United States—an estimated eleven million people—have no legal status,

³⁴⁵ Stephan Bauman, Matthew Soerens, and Issam Smeir, *Seeking Refuge: On the Shores of The Global Refugee Crisis* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2016), 29 (internal citations omitted).

³⁴⁶ Glenn H. Utter, *Mainline Christians and U.S. Public Policy* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2007), 55.

³⁴⁷ See, generally, Rick Jervis and Alan Gomes, "Trump Administration has Separated Hundreds of Children from Their Migrant Families Since 2018," *USA Today* (May 2, 2019), available at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/05/02/border-family-separations-trump-administration-border-patrol/3563990002/>

meaning either that they entered the country without inspection or overstayed a visa.³⁴⁸

With this contextualized definition as a baseline, I now consider migration in the biblical canon.

1. Diversity and Inclusion Through Immigration in the Old Testament

In considering migration trends in the Old Testament, Soerens and Yang highlight, “immigration is a common theme in the [s]criptures. There are several words in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament rendered into English as *alien*, *stranger*, *sojourner*, *foreigner*, or *immigrant*, depending on the translation.”³⁴⁹ Notwithstanding translations, however, the Bible is a sacred narrative of God’s interaction with humanity wherein migrants play key roles in an unfolding story. Indeed, “[t]hroughout [s]cripture God has used the movement of people to accomplish his greater purposes. Like immigrants today, the protagonists of the Old Testament left their homelands and migrated to other lands for a variety of reasons.”³⁵⁰

In Genesis 11, *Abram*, later *Abraham*, is introduced as an immigrant from Ur to Haran. As an Ur-born immigrant, he later journeyed to Canaan, with a stay in Egypt. “Abraham’s decision to leave Ur and bring his family to Canaan parallels the stories of many historical and contemporary immigrants who leave the lands they know and cross borders in pursuit of . . . promise . . .”³⁵¹ Abraham’s immigrant journey of faith—a direct parallel to so many that have been detained and/or deported under current United States policies—is a critical foundation of America’s three most popular religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all considered Abrahamic faith traditions.

³⁴⁸ Matthew Soerens & Jenny Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate* (revised & expanded)(Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2018), 23 (internal citations omitted).

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 85-86 (emphasis in original).

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Further, the Genesis 18 narrative also shows Abraham as an exemplar for hospitality to foreigners. When three strangers arrived at his home (unbeknownst to Abraham, they were messengers from God) Abraham was eager to be hospitable. Consider the following pericope:

The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heart of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, 'My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet., and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.' So they said, 'Do as you have said.' And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.' Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and sent it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate (Gen. 18:1-9).

Abraham's evidenced theology of welcome was no doubt the consequence of his own experiences as an immigrant in a foreign land. This is arguably similar to modern-day immigrants to the United States being embraced by earlier immigrants who help them acclimate and orient them to American culture.³⁵²

A few generations later, in Genesis 37, Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, also became an immigrant. Unlike Abraham, however, Joseph's journey into immigrant status *was not* a choice.³⁵³ Instead, it was like the many Africans who came to what is now the United States in shackles. "Though the exact date has been lost to history (it has come to be observed on Aug. 20

³⁵² Ibid., 87.

³⁵³ The Genesis narrative records Joseph as meeting his brothers' enmity and being sold into slavery, in much like the modern-day context of human trafficking. In relevant part, Genesis records the following:

Then Judah said to his brothers, 'What profit is it if we kill our brother and conceal his blood? Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and not lay our hands on him, for he is our brother, our own flesh.' And his brothers agreed. When some Midianite traders passed by, they drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt (Gen. 37:27-28).

[1619]), that was when a ship arrived at Point Comfort in the British colony of Virginia, bearing the cargo of 20 to 30 enslaved Africans.”³⁵⁴ One can therefore also argue that Joseph’s forced journey as an immigrant parallels the origins of the African-American existence.

Not all Old Testament immigrants were *from* Israel. There was also migration *into* Israel. In the book of Ruth, the narrative’s namesake, a woman from Moab, married a foreigner in her home country. After her foreign husband’s death, however, Ruth decided to follow her mother-in-law, Naomi, to the foreign land of Judah, even after being sternly cautioned to do otherwise.

So she said, ‘See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.’ But Ruth said, ‘Do not press me to leave you or turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people. And your God shall be my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you! (Ruth 1:15-18).

Ruth’s clear determination embodied the spirit of so many contemporary immigrants who also leave their homelands for the sake of family.³⁵⁵ Unfortunately, however, while attempting to maintain family unity, there are countless migrants who have been detailed at the Mexican-American border, with numerous children being separated from their families

In Exodus, God used Moses to lead the Israelites from an oppressive dictatorial governmental rule in Egypt, essentially as migrant refugees who were promised eventual habitation of the land of Canaan (Exodus 3:7-8). “The Israelites, under Moses’ leadership, became refugees fleeing persecution in Egypt and escaping, with God’s help, to a new land

³⁵⁴ Jake Silverstein, “Introduction,” *The New York Times Magazine: The 1619 Project* (Aug. 18, 2019), 4.

³⁵⁵ Soerens & Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 88. In further connecting Judaism and Christianity, two of the three most popular religions in the United States, it is important to note that, from an immigration perspective, scripture records Ruth’s migration to Israel, and subsequent marriage to Boaz, as forming the familial lineage of Jesus (see Matt 1:5 & 17). Further, as Soerens & Yang also highlight, “Ruth’s great-grandson David was thus born as the descendant of an immigrant. In God’s perfect plan, that did not stop him from becoming Israel’s greatest king.” Soerens & Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 88

where, like many refugees today, they found new challenges.”³⁵⁶ Indeed, in drawing a parallel between the cited Old Testament scriptures and America’s current immigration issues, I believe many immigrants also face significant challenges in the United States today.

2. Diversity and Inclusion Through Immigration in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the most popularly contextualized example of migration is arguably the life and ministry of Jesus, an itinerant preacher from Galilee, who was born as his family fled persecution, similar to the many Latinos who have also fled persecution in their homelands.³⁵⁷ Matthew records Jesus fleeing persecution, as an infant, because Mary and Joseph feared King Herod would kill them if they remained in Bethlehem of Judea. “Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.’” (Matt. 2:13). Matthew then goes on to record, after Joseph followed the admonition to flee, “When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under” (Matt. 2:16). This narrative of Jesus fleeing persecution, as an immigrant, is similar to many immigrant families fleeing the dictatorial rule of their native lands.

Although the New Testament speaks less expressly about immigrants, as compared with the Old Testament, there is an implied reference to immigration where the author of Hebrews advises readers to welcome strangers with hospitality because, in doing so, one may be entertaining angels without knowing it. (Heb.13:2). Further, the book of Acts also notes how God used migration to spread the gospel. When Stephen was martyred, “a severe persecution

³⁵⁶ Soerens & Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 88.

³⁵⁷ See, generally, Anthony W. Fontes, “Migrants’ Stories: Why They Flee,” *Latino USA* (Apr. 11, 2019), available at <https://www.latinousa.org/2019/04/11/whytheyflee>.

began against the church in Jerusalem, and *all* except the apostles were scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.” (Acts 8:1 (emphasis added)). As Soerens and Yang note, in espousing upon this divine occurrence, “God used this dispersion of Christ-followers to spread the gospel throughout Judea and beyond. For example, Phillip went south toward Gaza and encountered an Ethiopian pilgrim who accepted the good news and presumably brought it back to Africa.”³⁵⁸ A scripturally-based argument can therefore be made that God has used migration as a means of bringing disparate groups into communion with one another, united by the gospel of Jesus, in a place of diversity and inclusion.

Finally, Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, presents an impassioned critique of the oppressive political, religious, and socioeconomic realities of the Roman Empire. David Rhoads writes that Revelation “unveils the vision of a world-in-the-making, a vision of justice and peace embodied in a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem. And it delivers a rhetorically charged challenge for believers to withdraw from the Empire and to live even now in the worship and service of the God who is making all things new.”³⁵⁹

In a similar vein, while theorizing that Revelation was written through a lens of cognitive dissonance, Harry Maier argues “John composed Revelation to comfort Christians in Asia Minor who were being oppressed as a consequence of their refusal to acknowledge the divine claims of the emperor or to participate in his imperial cult. John thus urged them to hold fast and he held up for them the promise of divine reward . . .”³⁶⁰ Consequently, scholars traditionally date

³⁵⁸ Soerens & Yang, *Welcoming the Stranger*, 89 (citing Acts 8:26-30).

³⁵⁹ David Rhoads, “Introduction” in *From Every People and Nation: The Book of Revelation in Intercultural Perspective*, ed. David Rhoads (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 1.

³⁶⁰ Harry O. Maier, “Coming Out of Babylon: A First-World Reading of Revelation Among Immigrants,” in *From Every People and Nation*, 69.

Revelation as being written somewhere during the latter part of Emperor Domitian's reign, between 92 and 96 C.E., during a time Domitian promoted the Roman cult of emperor worship.³⁶¹

Inasmuch as John writes from a place of penal isolation on the island of Patmos, using the code word "Babylon" to describe the oppressive Roman throne, John's message of liberation in Christ offers a parallel for many who are marginalized within and ostracized from modern communities based on race, ethnicity, gender, and social status, while finding refuge in the diversity of the church. Indeed, as the chapter 1 discussion of Acts 2 reminds us, the church was founded on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to a geographically, ethnically, and socially diverse group of Jews, a group rich in both cognitive and identity diversity.

John's narrative in Revelation is anything but linear. In what is more like a pastoral letter, written in the Pauline tradition of influence, John describes "the future establishment of God's just rule throughout . . . creation, including scenes of the last battle and last judgment . . ." ³⁶² Eugene Boring describes John as a writing "a letter to Christians whom he knew and for whom he felt pastoral responsibility. . ." Moreover, in noting the liturgical context in which the letter would presumably be shared, Boring also writes, "The letter was not intended for private, silent reading but was written to be read aloud in the worship services of the churches . . ." ³⁶³ Accordingly, "Revelation's imagery is mostly taken from the tradition of images familiar to those who are accustomed to hearing the Bible read in the worship services of the ongoing People of God." ³⁶⁴

³⁶¹ See Clarice J. Martin, "Polishing the Unclouded Mirror: A Womanist Reading of Revelation 18:3" in *From Every People and Nation*, 91-92.

³⁶² M. Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 2.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.* In further describing the "People of God" and contextualizing the circumstances compelling John to write Revelation, Boring chronicles:

In describing the narrative's movements and shifts, Brian Blount compares Revelation to director Quentin Tarrantino's popular movie, *Pulp Fiction*, by writing:

Like the non-sequential plot of the movie, John of Patmos' narrative does not move in a straight line. This apocalyptic director starts in the middle of the story (chap. 1), gives multiple peeks at the arrival of the end time from three unique camera angles (seventh seal, seventh trumpet, seventh bowl), flashes back into the beginning of the story in the middle of the narrative (chaps. 12-14), then pushes to a wondrous end (chaps. 20-21), the approach to which he has already horrifically screened three times (seals, trumpets, and bowls, chaps. 1-6).³⁶⁵

In therefore appreciating Revelation's structure, it is easier to see that its seventh chapter is really part of "the End."

Revelation 7 describes both the church militant (7:1-8)—those called into political resistance from Rome's imperial domination—and the church triumphant (7:9-17)—those who have transcended the great ordeal and have been rewarded for their labor. John invokes imagery reminiscent of old Hebrew scriptures (Jer. 49:36; Zech 6:5; and Ezek 9:4), and references the symbolic number of 144,000 of people receiving the seal of God on their foreheads. "[T]he square of 12 multiplied by 1,000, has been interpreted variously as a reference to the faithful

In the period after the catastrophic war in Palestine between the Romans and the Jewish rebels (or freedom fighters, depending on one's perspective) in 66-70, there was a large influx of Jewish and Jewish-Christian immigrants and refugees into Asia, where there had already been an established Jewish community for generations. Partly as a result of conflict, Judaism was undergoing a clarification of its own identity and a restructuring of its institutions . . .

During this period increasing social and political pressures were brought to bear by government policies and there were tensions between the Christian community and other social groups, particularly the Jews, as well as tensions and conflicts within the church itself. The church was in a transitional and vulnerable situation, trying to find its way forward in the generation between the death of its apostolic leaders and the emergence of a firm structure and sense of self-identity. What did it mean to be Christian, to follow Jesus as Lord, in such a place and time? Revelation addresses this implicit question of all John's hearer-readers.

Ibid., 9.

³⁶⁵ Brian K. Blount, "Revelation" in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Brian K. Blount, gen. ed.)(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 523.

remnant of Israel; the church; the martyrs; the remnant of Christians who survive the eschatological turmoil; all of the redeemed . . .”³⁶⁶

It is also important to emphasize that, although this number may seem small by contemporary standards, its theological symbolism would have been vast for John’s listeners/readers. In addressing this, Boring writes:

The number 144,000 is intended as symbolic theology, not literal mathematics. From our perspective it may sound limiting. . . and rather small; but in the ears of John’s hearer-readers the number is stunningly large. Along with ‘myriad’ (literally 10,000), ‘thousand’ is the largest numerical unit found in the Bible. In biblical usage both are used primarily to mean ‘a very large number’ rather than to be taken with literal precision . . . A multitude of 144,000 is meant to convey the impression of a vast throng beyond all reckoning (precisely the same as 7:9!).³⁶⁷

Furthermore, in attempting to identify the 144,000 people John references, Boring also argues that for John, a part of the Pauline tradition, this symbolic number represents a continuation of Israel in the church.³⁶⁸ “The church in this picture is not only big, it is complete. The number 144,000 is a complete, fulfilled number. (The 144 is obviously the multiple of 12 x 12, the twelve tribes of old Israel and the twelve apostles of the new Israel . . .).”³⁶⁹ John’s imagery of the church was therefore “complete” in that it represented a large and inclusive entity that, similar to the Day of Pentecost, was filled with both cognitive and identity diversity.

After establishing this diverse foundation in the first eight verses of Revelation 7, John wrote, “After this I looked, and there was *a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages*, standing before the throne and before the

³⁶⁶ Jean-Pierre Ruiz, “The Revelation to John,” *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with The Apocrypha* (4th ed. Michael D. Coogan, ed)(New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2163.

³⁶⁷ Boring, *Revelation*, 130.

³⁶⁸ See *ibid*, 129-30.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 130.

Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.” (Rev. 7:9). In what is the assurance of ultimate salvation, invoking images of white robes and palm branches to symbolize righteousness and victory,³⁷⁰ John shifts the narrative from earth to heaven where the richly diverse church triumphant worships God. Indeed, Boring writes, “As 7:1-8 presents the church militant on earth, sealed and drawn up in in battle formation before the coming struggle, 7:9-17 presents the church after the battle, triumphant in heaven.”³⁷¹ Accordingly, this scriptural review shows that, through “grafting” and migration, God intended the church militant to be a place of diversity, inclusion, and welcome to the proverbial Other. Moreover, in illustrating the church militant’s vast diversity before the final ordeal, John’s Revelation 7 narrative also shows that God intends the church triumphant to be a place of complete diversity, too.

(B) And How Can Diversity and Inclusion Be Good in Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation?

In building upon God’s intended diversity and inclusion in the church, as evidenced in Revelation 7, I operate from a fundamental premise that the church—much like but more so than higher education institutions—plays a special role in preparing people to address society’s most vexing problems (please recall the Supreme Court’s logic in *Fisher v. University of Texas*, discussed in chapter 4). Indeed, in *The End of White Christian America*, Robert Jones argues, “In theory, a central part of the Christian Church’s mission is to challenge its members to think beyond worldly perspectives and divisions. Churches are supposed to be sacred places where social distinctions that structure politics in the workplace melt away. This ideal permeates the New Testament scriptures . . .”³⁷² Moreover, as part of a discussion about differences arising

³⁷⁰ Jean-Pierre Ruiz, “The Revelation to John,” 2164.

³⁷¹ Boring, *Revelation*, 131.

³⁷² Robert P. Jones, *The End of White Christian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2016), 163.

from cultural factors including ethnicity, acculturation, gender, and sexual orientation, Ross writes, “These differences . . . create enormous opportunities to better understand the needs of our markets and the potential for providing products and services that dramatically outstrip the limitations of those provided by a homogeneous group . . .”³⁷³

1. Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation Requires That Social Divisions Be Addressed

Insofar as churches are typically associated with addressing social problems through missionary work and evangelism, I argue they should also address some of the social divisions that have made society so polarized, including racism, sexism, and classism. I believe such bold approaches move the church toward reconciliation. On this point, Perkins implicitly calls for the church to return to her apostolic origins of diversity by referencing the Acts narrative.

For too long, many in the church have argued that unity in the body of Christ across ethnic and social lines is a separate issue from the gospel. There has been the suggestion that we can be reconciled to God without being reconciled to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Scripture doesn’t bear that out. We only need to examine what happened when the Church was birthed to see exactly how God intends for this issue of reconciliation within the body of Christ to fall out. In the book of Acts we begin to see what happens when God’s radical vision for the Church collides with the culture. Man is sinful and does not easily give up his prejudices and dislikes. But again and again the Holy Spirit had His way and wrestled the people of God to submission on the issue of reconciliation.³⁷⁴

What Perkins *implies*, my advocacy makes *explicit*: the church universal must return to her apostolic origins of diversity and inclusion, to move toward reconciliation, and be an exemplar for society-at-large.

Perkins also calls on the church to have another “Great Awakening,” to address her current issues of division, including race, and move toward reconciliation. After reminding

³⁷³ Ross, *ReInventing Diversity*, 106.

³⁷⁴ Perkins, *One Blood*, 32-33.

readers of Peter's Spirit-inspired ability to move past racial and ethnic divisions and welcome Cornelius into the Church (Acts 10), Perkins argues for the same type of Spirit-inspired reconciliation today. He writes:

America has seen at least three Great Awakenings over the course of our history. With each of them there was a break from complacency and ritual ceremony. God used each of them to inspire movements aimed at healing the ills of society. They were marked by a deep sense of personal conviction and a commitment to a new standard of personal morality. The Second Great Awakening was used by God to stir the hearts of Christians toward the abolition of slavery. The experience of free whites and enslaved blacks worshiping together at these revivals caused many white Christians to begin to question the differences between their spiritual reality and their cultural practice. I'm praying for another Great Awakening where God shakes the Church in America and helps us to see the truth about race and how our misunderstandings have stained the vision.

Race is just one way that we've allowed ourselves to be divided, but it's a big one. And in light of our nation's checkered history with the subject, it's clearly one that we need to do more corporate confession and lamenting about before we can move forward.³⁷⁵

As discussed in chapter 4, racial divisions were the impetus for Nixon's southern strategy, as a response to the progress of diversity and inclusion made during the Civil Rights Movement, and the genesis of the Republican Party's courtship with evangelicals. I agree with Perkins in that, although race is only one issue, it is most certainly a big one!

Indeed, in playing off Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous 1963 statement that 11am on Sunday mornings is the most segregated hour in America, Jones discusses the historical problem of racial divisions in churches, while also highlighting mild progress toward reconciliation. Jones argues that racial reconciliation is built into scripture and liturgy, arguing:

It's written into the lyrics of popular hymns like 'In Christ There is No East or West.' The words of the hymn extol a vision of racial harmony—'Join hands, disciples of the faith, whatever your race may be. / All children of the living God

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 53-54.

are surely kin to me.’—and its tune was the first African American music to be used in a white mainline North American hymnal.³⁷⁶

He also laments, however, that “however deeply the principles of racial equality may be enshrined in theology and liturgy, they have had little impact on the actual racial composition of Christian congregation, past or present.”³⁷⁷ Accordingly, there must be an ecclesial willingness to address social issues to move the church toward reconciliation.³⁷⁸

In addressing some of the mild progress that has occurred in recent years, although most churches throughout America remain segregated, Jones also highlights,

Duke University’s National Congregations Study, which has been documenting trends in congregational diversity over the last two decades, found that between 1998 and 2012 the number of churchgoers attending predominately white congregations *with at least some* black members increased from 57 percent to 69 percent., and the number of churchgoers attending predominately white congregations *with at least some* Hispanic members increased from 54 percent to 62 percent.³⁷⁹

Although these documented increases in identity diversity are far from parity in racial reconciliation, they at least indicate progress.

2. Moving the Church Toward Reconciliation Requires Cognitive and Identity Diversity to Address Issues and Solve Social Problems

Well-documented arguments support the conclusion that diverse groups are better at problem solving than homogenous ones. In *Smart Mobs*, for example, Harold Reingold describes

³⁷⁶ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 163.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 163-64.

³⁷⁸ Some denominations have already proven to be forward-thinking in addressing issues of race. The Episcopal Church, for example, has an active Ministry on Social Justice & Reconciliation. See, generally, <https://episcopalchurch.org/racial-reconciliation>. Similarly, the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice addresses a variety of issues, including environmental matters that disproportionately effect minority communities. See, e.g., https://www.ucc.org/environmental-ministries_environmental-racism. Moreover, the United Methodist Church also has a General Commission on Religion and Race. See www.gcorr.org.

³⁷⁹ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 165 (emphasis in original).

how emergent collections of people carry out tasks and solve problems.³⁸⁰ Similarly, in *The Wisdom of Crowds*, Jim Surowiecki shows that crowds of people can make accurate predictions.³⁸¹ Most salient, however, in *The Difference*, wherein Page primarily considers the tasks of problem solving and prediction, he specifically argues, “Diverse perspectives increase the number of solutions that a collection of people can find by creating different connections among the possible solutions.”³⁸² If Page’s premise is correct, the church universal would most certainly benefit from a Revelation 7:9 diversity and inclusivity perspective in trying to solve social problems and move toward reconciliation in the body of Christ.

From an ecclesial perspective, the ability to better do mission work and evangelism can only be improved by diversity. In *ReInventing Diversity*, for example, Ross tells the story of an otherwise homogeneous team working for hours in trying to find a solution. At lunchtime, however, when an administrative team member brought in lunch, his cognitively diverse vantage point allowed him to immediately see the impediment to the group solving the problem.³⁸³ Moreover, from an organizational perspective, the ability to better address social problems and provide sustainable, long-term solutions increases when the problem solvers share both cognitive *and* identity diversity. “People with different life experiences and training, people from different cultural backgrounds, likely see the world differently. And those differences—differences in perspectives—can be valuable when solving problems or making predictions.”³⁸⁴ I argue this is the type of diversity God intended for the *ekklesia*.

³⁸⁰ Harold Reingold, *Smart Mobs* (Cambridge: Perseus Press, 2002).

³⁸¹ James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (New York: Doubleday Press, 2004).

³⁸² Page, *The Difference*, 9.

³⁸³ Ross, *ReInventing Diversity*, 201.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

In returning to Page's description of the differences between and importance of both *cognitive diversity* and *identity diversity*, consider the gospel narratives description of the disciples' respective backgrounds (cognitive), as well as the ethnic differences of the various Jews who formed the church on the day of Pentecost (identity). From a cognitive diversity perspective, although the pre-ministry occupations of all of the twelve disciples are not definitively known, we do know they came from varying backgrounds. Peter, for example, the first disciple Jesus called, was a fisherman, as was his brother, Andrew (Matt. 4:18). Similarly, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were fisherman, too (Matt. 4:21).

Although fishing was a respectable vocation in Jewish culture, not all the disciples came from such non-controversial backgrounds. Matthew, for example, was a tax collector (Matt. 9:9), a position that connected him to the Roman government as an agent for oppression of Jewish people. There was also Simon, the Canaanite (Matt. 10:4), who was known as the Zealot (Luke 6:15; see also Acts 1:13), a title suggesting his zeal may have been in political organizing or leading insurrections against the dominant Roman government as a member of the Zealots, the Jewish nationalistic party.³⁸⁵ Regardless of their occupational specifics, however, we can readily see the apostles were cognitively diverse because of their respective backgrounds and experiences.

Further, from an identity diversity perspective, the Acts 2 narrative describes the diversity of ethnicities that came together on the day of Pentecost to comprise the church. "And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya . . . both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages . . .

³⁸⁵ See, e.g., The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, "Saint Simon the Apostle," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Saint-Simon-the-Apostle>.

(Acts. 2: 8-11). The church’s apostolic origins, therefore, show its creation was rooted in God’s deliberate embrace of diversity and inclusion.

In similarly writing from a secular, organizational perspective, Page also advocates for both cognitive *and* identity diversity in problem solving. He argues:

If individual diversity contributes to collective benefits, we should pursue pro-diversity policies. Companies, organizations, and universities that hire and admit diverse people should not expect instant results. But, in the long run, diversity should produce benefits . . .

[A]ll else being equal, we should expect someone different—be their differences in training, experiences, or identity—to be more likely to have the unique experience that leads to the breakthrough . . .”³⁸⁶

If this logic is good for secular organizations seeking to address social issues, and was obviously part of God’s original intention for the *ekklesia*, diversity and inclusion should also be good for contemporary ecclesial organizations attempting to solve problems, too.

III Evangelicals and the Issues: Can the Divisions Unearthed by the “Make America Great Again” Narrative Actually Move the Church Universal Toward Reconciliation?

In referring back to the epigraph that begins this fifth chapter, insofar as the first three chapters presented a narrative of moving the church toward reconciliation, chapter 4 presented a counternarrative. While exploring the consequences of civil reconciliation, I argued the fusion of evangelical Christians and the Religious Right that coalesced in consistent support of Republican presidential candidates, united in an opposition to *Roe v. Wade* and eventually gave birth to the extremity of Trump’s Make America Great Again. In concluding chapter 4, however, I

³⁸⁶ Page, *The Difference*, 369-70.

referenced public divisions that now exist because of Trump's personal character flaws and political governance.

As far back as June 2016, although then-candidate Trump's evangelical advisors included credentialed conservatives like Ralph Reed, architect of the Christian Right's 1990s evolution toward pluralism and professionalization; James Dobson of Focus on the Family; Jerry Falwell, Jr., president of Liberty University; and Richard Land, formerly of the Southern Baptist Convention's advocacy form, there were some significant holdouts, including Russell Moore and the prominent evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*.³⁸⁷ As Andrew Lewis writes,

Andy Crouch, executive editor of *Christianity Today*, published an editorial denouncing Trump: "[Trump] has given no evidence of humility or dependence on others, let alone on God his Maker and Judge. He wantonly celebrates strongmen and takes every opportunity to humiliate and demean the vulnerable. He shows no curiosity or capacity to learn. He is, in short, the very embodiment of what the Bible calls a fool."³⁸⁸

Accordingly, unlike Ronald Reagan who solidified evangelical support, Trump's politics and policies are arguably one reason, at least, the previously support seems to be unraveling.

Here, in Part Three, I explore two primary areas of difference that appear to divide evangelicals: (1) the debate between individual rights and communal mortality; and (2) opinion differences between cultural and non-cultural issues. Further, in illustrating how the church is and can move toward reconciliation, after highlighting issues, I provide an example of significant progress in a place and space where progress was originally improbable.

(A) Broad Differences Among Evangelicals: Individual Rights vs. Communal Morality

The 2016 presidential election highlighted several divisions in America. Inasmuch as the country was divided between Trump and Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee, evangelicals

³⁸⁷ See, generally, Lewis, "Divided Over Rights," 80-81.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 81 (internal citation omitted).

were also divided over individual rights and communal morality. Although evangelicals *were not* politically divided in 2016,³⁸⁹ “the election exposed an evangelical division over the proper way forward in a changing culture. Should evangelicals return to majoritarian, morality-based politics of the prior generation or pursue a minority, rights-based position?”³⁹⁰

In addressing this conundrum, Lewis also chronicles recent reasons why evangelicals have had to rethink their path forward.

In the past decade, the Christian Right has been soul searching, especially with its largest culture-war defeat to date—the rapid legalization of (and public support for) same-sex marriage . . . With the cultural writing on the wall, prominent Christian Right leaders and organizations have increasingly turned toward preserving broad individual rights, particularly the rights of religious freedom and free speech, shifting from a communitarian approach adopted when they were the moral majority. Evangelicals have sought to protect their own political rights, but they have also been willing to selectively stand up for the political rights of others, even political enemies, with an eye toward protecting their increasingly unpopular views.³⁹¹

Lewis also shares, “What is particularly troubling for the cohesion of the movement is that pursuing a rights-based strategy may serve to further integrate followers into the American right culture . . . *Not all evangelicals have been satisfied with this acceptance of minority politics. . . The candidacy of Donald Trump exposed this division.*”³⁹²

Indeed, although evangelicals solidly voted for Trump in 2016, because they have become more “tolerant” of mainstream culture over the last decades, there are brewing internal divisions over how they will move forward. This internal evangelical division presents an

³⁸⁹ According to Andrew Lewis, “the election did not divide evangelical political sympathies; as exit polls showed, they supported Donald Trump at similar levels as they had supported prior republican candidates, both in choice and turnout.” Lewis, “Divided Over Rights,” 77 (internal citations omitted).

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 78.

³⁹² Ibid, 78-79 (emphasis added).

opportunity for certain evangelical factions to build relationships with some mainline Protestants and move the church toward reconciliation.

(B) Moving Evangelicals Toward (Biblical) Reconciliation: The Removal of Tension Between Parties and the Return of Loving Relationships

Although the foregoing highlights some areas where issues have and are dividing evangelical Christians, I now show an example of why there is optimism in that, whether it be out of necessity or contrition, reconciliation is occurring in places where it would not have seemed even remotely possible. My intention here is not to provide a comprehensive listing of the many places where the church is moving toward reconciliation. Instead, I will briefly highlight Middle Collegiate Church in New York City, one congregation that has committed to a ministry of reconciliation rooted in diversity and inclusion.

Middle Collegiate is currently led by its first African American and first female pastor, Reverend Jacqui Lewis.³⁹³ A review of the church's Website indicates the congregation places a premium on diversity in creating a place of welcome for all. Its "Who We Are" section provides:

The diversity of our congregation and staff looks like a New York City subway but it feels like a home full of love. Middle Church is where therapy meets Broadway; where art and dance meet a gospel revival; where old time religion gets a new twist. We are Bach, Beatles, and Beethoven; we are jazz, hip-hop, and spirituals. We are inspired by Howard Thurman, Ruby Sales, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Martin Luther King. We are on-your-feet worship and take-it-to-the-streets activism. We feed the hungry and work for a living wage; we fight for LGBTQ equality and march for racial/ethnic justice. We stand up for the stranger and the immigrant; we care for women's lives and Mother Earth.³⁹⁴

This indeed evidences the congregation's commitment to both cognitive *and* identity diversity. As progressive and inclusive as Middle Church currently is, however, the

³⁹³ <https://www.middlechurch.org>

³⁹⁴ <https://www.middlechurch.org/who-we-are>

congregation's history suggests it was probably the least likely place for reconciliation to occur.

Middle Church results from the Dutch West India Company sending Reverend Jonas Michaelius to the New Amsterdam settlement, on the southern tip of the island of Manhattan.³⁹⁵ From very humble beginnings, Middle Church grew to become the oldest continuous Protestant congregation in the United States,³⁹⁶ and is currently co-affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the Reformed Church in America.³⁹⁷

Although Middle Church has a storied history, its neighborhood was quickly changing and the congregation was not. The neighborhood's German and northern European immigrants had been replaced by Hispanics, Asians, young professionals, and artists. Jones chronicles the neighborhood's changes and congregation's story in writing:

By the 1980s, Middle Church was in such bad shape that the Collegiate Corporation considered shuttering it altogether. Membership had dwindled to two dozen older white congregants, many of whom commuted into the city for services. It no longer had a community presence, the building was deteriorating, and the sparse congregation could afford neither the upkeep of the building nor the pastor's salary.

But after surveying the area, the corporation determined that *a different kind of church* could once again serve the neighborhood.³⁹⁸

Middle Church's circumstances required it to move in another direction. That prophetic direction was toward reconciliation.

Under Reverend Gordon R. Dragt's leadership, Middle Church was deliberate in "moving" back into its neighborhood. It provided neighborhood artists with gallery and

³⁹⁵ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 180.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ <https://www.middlechurch.org/who-we-are>

³⁹⁸ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 181 (emphasis added).

performance space, hired a jazz ensemble to play on the front steps of the church half an hour before worship services, and began community outreach targeted at local needs, including meals for people living with HIV/AIDS and affordable after-school childcare.³⁹⁹ “As new kinds of people began to attend church on Sunday morning, Dragt began to adapt the traditional liturgy to their interests. He removed the front row of pews to have more room for performers, and the church started a gospel choir, which turned out to be a vital entry point for many new members.”⁴⁰⁰ As this “old church” changed, and moved toward reconciliation, by the mid-1990s, Middle Church’s average Sunday attendance exceeded two hundred, with as many as four hundred on holidays.⁴⁰¹

The congregation’s success, resulting from its deliberate work toward reconciliation, drew the attention of its current pastor, a then PhD candidate at Drew University, who was called by the congregation in 2005.⁴⁰² Under Lewis’s leadership, the congregation has developed an even stronger voice in areas addressing racial and social justice, while also making its worship more inclusive with dancing and a gospel choir.⁴⁰³ Middle Church is now thriving because of its deliberate steps in moving toward reconciliation, embracing diversity and inclusion principles. “Reverend Lewis provides a striking embodiment of Middle Church’s transformation from a homogeneous white, elite congregation to an ethnically diverse community comprised of

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 181-82.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid.

⁴⁰² <https://www.middlechurch.org/ministers/Rev-Jacqueline-J-Lewis>

⁴⁰³ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 183.

members who are gay and straight, well-off and down-on-their-luck, straight-laced and tattooed.”⁴⁰⁴ This is arguably the Revelation 7 diversity John wrote about.

I celebrate Middle Church’s success, and personally recognize its difficulty, as someone who has done the deliberate work of racial reconciliation. In working through Mission Reconcile’s “Pathways Toward Reconciliation,” while previously leading Historic St. James AME Church, a majority black congregation in downtown New Orleans, I partnered with Reverend Andrew Greenhaw, a dear friend and white pastor who leads St. Paul’s United Church of Christ in uptown New Orleans.⁴⁰⁵ Although I am personally aware that Historic St. James benefited from whites and Hispanics who chose to join her in moving toward reconciliation, I can also appreciate that radical hospitality for the Other is not always extended by majority white congregations, the way it is by St. Paul’s in New Orleans. Middle Church’s pre-reconciliation work history supports King’s old axiom that 11am on Sunday mornings is the most segregated hour in America.

Indeed, in *The End of White Christian America*, Jones also addresses this historical phenomenon by writing:

The work of desegregating churches will require some trailblazing both by majority-white congregations and by individual white Christians. At the congregational level, majority-white churches will need to initiate more cultural cross-pollination efforts, just as conducting joint services or initiating regular pulpit exchanges. Beyond Sunday morning, co-sponsoring community service projects, such as taking on a Habitat for Humanity house, could provide a way to build multiracial ‘sweat equity.’ And majority-white congregations could look for more opportunities to dedicate their resources (meeting space, volunteer power,

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 184.

⁴⁰⁵ See, generally, “Path to Reconciliation: Two Courageous Churches Partnered for Inaugural Path to Reconciliation Event,” <https://www.iamareconciler.org/events> (explaining the Mission Reconcile partnership between two congregations, one primarily black and the other primarily white, including its consecutive weeks of pulpit exchange and fixed question dialogue over dinner, as means to break down barriers of racism in church communities).

financial support) to support causes that concern their nonwhite neighbors, even when those causes do not immediately resonate with their own sensibilities.

Ultimately, though, the country will need more multiracial congregations. Moreover, because of the power of dominant cultural white paradigms in the broader culture, these multiracial congregations will need to have significant nonwhite leadership.⁴⁰⁶

Such a recipe for success, as exemplified at Middle Collegiate Church, sets a model for diversity and inclusion that moves the church toward reconciliation, allowing her to be an exemplar for society-at-large.

IV Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I have answered the proverbial question, “Where Do We Go From Here?”, by expressly arguing the church universal must “go back” to the principles of diversity and inclusion that were part of her apostolic origins if she is to move toward reconciliation.

The church has never been monolithic. Consequently, the simplicity of my advocacy is not intended to overly simplify the process of uniting factions within the body of Christ. The fact is, however, for more than forty-years, evangelicals have been far removed from mainline, Protestant Christianity. For the first time in a long time, the extremity and enmity of Trump’s Make America Great Again narrative has revealed factions within evangelical Christianity that suggest deliberate work can build cohesions and move the church toward reconciliation. Accordingly, there is evidenced potential to focus more on the ministry of reconciliation Jesus left to the church and less on social divisions that have been deliberately stoked by partisan rancor.

⁴⁰⁶ Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, 193-94.

In making the argument that God intended for the church to be diverse, this chapter followed a biblical progression to illustrate how God used migration to create diversity in the church militant, while also including an eschatological perspective on God's intention for diversity in church triumphant. John's Revelation—essentially a pastoral letter written from Patmos—illustrates that God intended for the church to be rich in both cognitive *and* identity diversity, a bedrock principle of diversity and inclusion practices in the secular world. If the church can return to this embrace, as evidenced in its apostolic origins, she can be an exemplar for society-at-large.

The work of racial reconciliation is not easy. It remains a destination on the horizon. This chapter, however, makes the argument that it is indeed possible to move the church toward reconciliation, while simultaneously giving an example of how theory can be implemented in practice. If this interdisciplinary chapter proves anything, since scripture teaches that God is no respecter of persons, we truly can “hold these truths to be self-evident that all [people] are created equally!”

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Rev. Jay Augustine serves as senior pastor of St. Joseph African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Durham, NC, and as national chaplain of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. Immediately prior to serving St. Joseph, Augustine was senior pastor of Historic St. James AME Church in New Orleans, the birthplace of African Methodism in the Deep South and oldest predominately black, Protestant church in the city. He was also an adjunct law professor at Southern University.

Augustine authored *The Keys Are Being Passed: Race, Law, Religion and the Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement* (2014), a book featured at places including the *Essence* Music Festival, Fine Arts Festival at Martha's Vineyard and the Congressional Black Caucus Annual Legislative Forum. He has also authored numerous scholarly articles appearing in national publications, including the *Hastings Race & Poverty Law Journal*, *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal* and the *University of San Francisco Law Review*. His written scholarship has been cited by the Louisiana Supreme Court in published opinion.

As an attorney, Augustine successfully represented a class of plaintiffs in *Carter v. St. Helena Parish School Board*, one of the oldest desegregation cases in the United States, having originally been filed by Thurgood Marshall, then-counsel for the NAACP. He also served in the administration of Louisiana's 55th governor, as executive counsel & director of legislative affairs for the Louisiana Workforce Commission, and in locally elected office as vice president of the East Baton Rouge Parish School Board. He is a former judge *ad hoc* of the Baton Rouge City Court, silver life member of the NAACP, and life member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Augustine was previously named "Outstanding Alumni Brother of the Year," by Alpha Phi Alpha (2017), having also won the fraternity's "Belford V. Lawson Oratorical Scholarship Contest" while in college (1994). He received President Barack Obama's "Lifetime Achievement Award" (2016), the National Bar Association's "Forty Lawyers Under 40" Award (2011) and *Ebony* Magazine's "30 Leaders of the Future" recognition (2001). He earned an economics degree from Howard University, along with an active duty commission as a U.S. Army infantry officer. Following four-years of decorated military service, Augustine earned his Juris Doctorate from Tulane University and served as a law clerk to Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice (then-Associate) Bernette Joshua Johnson. He later earned his Master of Divinity from United Theological Seminary, as a Beane Fellow and National Rainbow-PUSH Foundation Coalition Scholar, before completing a fellowship for further study at Princeton Theological Seminary. Augustine is currently a Doctor of Ministry degree candidate at Duke University.

Rev. Augustine is married to Michelle Burks Augustine, his partner in life, and together they have two children, Mason and Jillian.