

# Crucifying Jim Crow: Conservative Christianity and the Quest for Racial Justice

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Jim Crow was not voted out of office. He was drowned, in a baptism. Contemporary evangelicals, like most Americans, are prone to see the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s as the triumph of secular Enlightenment egalitarianism. In fact, however, the civil rights movement drew on the imagery and vision of American revivalism. In so doing, the civil rights movement succeeded precisely because its proponents were able to shame the American conscience by appealing to a profoundly orthodox understanding of conversionism and churchmanship. With an underpinning of conservative evangelical concepts of soteriology and ecclesiology, American evangelicals were able to see that their sins against African-Americans in the oppressive Jim Crow power structures were about more than southern tradition. Instead, segregation and racial injustice were, at the gut level, a repudiation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Conservative evangelicals had their segregationist views confronted, not with an alien ideology, but with their own theology—a theology that emphasized both the dignity of the individual and the reconciliation of the community in ways inconsonant with racial bigotry. With racial, ethnic, and tribal animosities accelerating across the globe, it is imperative that contemporary evangelical conservatives understand the evangelical impulses at the heart of the civil rights movement, impulses that provide a bibli-

cal portrait of the personal, corporate, and cosmic aspects of the gospel. In so doing, conservative evangelicals can speak theologically to the crises of racial hatred by drawing on the implications of their convictions about personal regeneration and the community of the church. This theological awareness is even more critical when contemporary evangelicals are asked increasingly to accept newer movements—from feminism to homosexual liberation and beyond—as the legitimate heirs of the civil rights movement.

## Evangelical Theology, Racial Justice, and the Witness of History

The civil rights movement is often pictured as the triumph of a progressive secularist ideal of progress and equality over the dark prejudices of orthodox Christianity and its understandings of sin and redemption. Often, the supposed evangelical roots of Jim Crow are couched in terms of the nineteenth century's evangelical Protestant defense of slavery—a position that resulted in, among other things, the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the Southern Presbyterian Church. Historian Jerrold Packard is typical of this approach. "With few exceptions, Southern Protestants defended segregation as strongly in the mid-twentieth century as they had slavery in the mid-nineteenth," he argues. "Fundamentally, American Protestantism before the civil rights revolution stood

foursquare, shoulder to shoulder, and homily to homily as a defender of white supremacy.”<sup>1</sup> With such assumptions in place, Packard admits that he is perplexed as to why orthodox Christianity continued to have such a strong hold on the African American community in the Jim Crow South. “The question remains as to why black people in America ever wanted to adopt a theological configuration that had so obviously been riddled with racism and whose white communicants so clearly did not want to communicate, even in the theological sense, with black people.”<sup>2</sup> He therefore can only argue that the conservative Protestantism of African Americans was yet another aspect of the coercion of antebellum slaveholders over the bodies and souls of their slaves. Tribal African religions were rooted out by the dominant White culture, and all that remained was the religious piety of the evangelical South.

This thesis does seem to carry with it some historical weight. After all, racial bigotry—from the nativism of the “Know Nothing” Party to the terrorism of the Ku Klux Klan—often cloaked itself in the guise of conservative American Protestantism.<sup>3</sup> And yet, as secularist historian David Chappell has demonstrated in a pioneering work on the civil rights movement, this thesis ignores the movement’s own symbols and rhetoric, which were saturated with the language of Protestant piety and revivalist zeal. It is this theological vision, Chappell argues, that answers the question that has perplexed scholars for a generation, namely, “Why were the enemies of the civil rights movement, for one fleeting but decisive moment, so weak?”<sup>4</sup> The explanation, Chappell argues, is that the civil rights activists “were driven not

by liberal faith in human reason, but by older, seemingly more durable prejudices and superstitions that were rooted in Christian and Jewish myth.”<sup>5</sup> Chappell’s argument drives a stake through the myth of the segregationist bloc of evangelical southern religion in the twentieth century. As he points out, the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision that outlawed school segregation, was officially *supported* both by the messengers to the SBC and by the General Assembly of the southern Presbyterians.<sup>6</sup> History bears out Chappell’s assessment. This is not to say that sentiment was monolithic in southern evangelicalism. Southern Baptist segregationists, for instance, remained a formidable voice—to the denomination’s shame. And yet, as Chappell points out, the segregationists ultimately failed because they were unable to attain religious legitimacy for the White supremacist position—even with the background of the nineteenth century’s attempts to justify slavery biblically and theologically.

Chappell’s contention honestly grapples with a theological legacy of the civil rights movement that many other secular historians seem reluctant to note. He is right, for example, that the Southern Baptist Convention in full session never championed Jim Crow, and indeed stood on the record against it. Following *Brown v. Board of Education*, the SBC voted to accept a recommendation that Southern Baptists “recognize the fact that this Supreme Court decision is in harmony with the constitutional guarantee of equal freedom to all citizens, and with the Christian principles of equal justice and love for all men.”<sup>7</sup> And the denomination’s Christian Life Commission (CLC) was notorious in the eyes of the southern

segregationists because of its full-throated endorsement of civil rights and racial justice. This was truly remarkable given the cultural milieu of southern evangelical religion—especially among the Southern Baptists. True, most of the denominational agents for change on SBC racial attitudes were theological liberals such as North Carolina pastor Carlyle Marney, CLC president Foy Valentine, and Southern Seminary ethicist Henlee Barnette. But how did they pull the grassroots so quickly away from the reigning cultural ethos of Jim Crow? Charles Marsh, who grew up in a Southern Baptist pastor's home in Mississippi through the tumult of the civil rights era, writes that his father, while a student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary “had learned of his denomination's progressive views on race—views not shared by most of the pastor's in our neck of the woods, but part of the public record nonetheless.”<sup>8</sup> But, for Marsh's father, this “on the record” racial progressivism was countered by the effects of congregationalism:

Baptists of our Southern stripe regarded the local church as the sole authority in all matters of Christian faith and practice. This was called ‘congregational polity,’ as mentioned earlier. Lots of books and articles have been written on the subject, and like any theological idea, congregational polity has its own complex history of controversy and dispute. Still, it's a pretty easy idea to summarize: If you are a Baptist preacher and want to be successful, you better size up the people quickly. If they want aqua carpet instead of the standard maroon, you'll take a sudden liking for the aqua. If they root for Ole Miss over the Crimson Tide, you'll not say too much about your fondness for the Bear. If they want you to keep quiet about Negroes, you'll put a lid on your uneasy conscience. No bishop or presbyter will come to

your defense. The local church is free to do its own thing, governed by the contingencies of race, class, and custom, by whatever idiosyncrasies prevail. In the 1960s, congregational polity turned out to be the Southern Way of Life baptized by immersion.<sup>9</sup>

So how did racial progressives overcome this “baptized way of life”? They did so by confronting the theologically conservative majority with a conservative theology. Even racially-progressive denominational elites such as Barnette or Valentine appealed to a conservative theological tradition in order to shame White evangelical churches by the standards of their own orthodox theology and conversionist zeal. This is consistent with the language of Martin Luther King Jr. who, while theologically in the Protestant liberal stream of Paul Tillich, often preached on racial justice with the language of a revivalist.<sup>10</sup> They appealed not to America's reason, but to America's conscience—and they started with the churches. Indeed, such a strategy did not begin with the racial crisis, but in successive earlier appeals by “progressives” to awaken the churches to the need for activism in the public square on such issues as poverty, alcoholism, and other issues of social concern—an appeal that was met with suspicion by churches aware of the aberrant theological underpinnings of the Social Gospel movement. As historian James J. Thompson Jr. notes, the strategy was to root such appeals in the Bible and the Great Commission:

To ease this opposition, they spent much time allaying the widespread suspicion that Baptist activists formed a seditious minority intent on foisting alien ideas on God's people. These assurances generally emerged as finely wrought appeals to biblical tradition as precedent for

earthly reform. More important, moderates tried to forge a reform ethic within the confines of Baptist doctrine, attempting to prove that social concern complemented spiritual rebirth, personal salvation, and soul winning.<sup>11</sup>

In appealing to the doctrines of personal regeneration and the regenerate church, the civil rights movement was able to reach conservative evangelical consciences with a profoundly biblical understanding of racial reconciliation by appealing to what evangelicals already claimed to know about the individual and community aspects of Christian soteriology and ecclesiology.

### **Evangelical Individualism and the Quest for Racial Justice: The Doctrine of Salvation**

Why didn't Billy Graham march in Selma? This was the question yelled by a heckler from the stands at the beginning of the evangelist's Copenhagen crusade in the 1960s. The youth's query was hardly unjustified. After all, the preacher from the mountains of North Carolina was traveling the globe with the message of personal regeneration as the antidote to the socio-political problems protested by the youth counterculture movements. And yet, many of his young listeners wondered, where was Graham on one of the most morally significant movements in American history? Beneath such questions, noted Graham's friend, evangelical theologian Carl F. H. Henry, there lies a cruel irony. Yes, Henry conceded, the civil rights movement had mobilized citizens in Alabama and across the South to protest the injustice of Jim Crow segregation.

"But Graham had been integrating meetings in the South long before the marchers had become existentialized," he

argued. "And, moreover, he had done so in the context of biblical Christianity."<sup>12</sup>

The heckler's question represents a key divide over the relationship between conservative American evangelicalism and the fight against racial bigotry. Critics of evangelical orthodoxy have long insisted—starting with the Social Gospel critiques of Walter Rauschenbusch—that the evangelical insistence on the priority of personal regeneration leads to disengagement from social concerns. The emphasis on personal regeneration, it is assumed, fits naturally with some powerful currents of individualism in southern culture, which served to prop up both economic libertarianism and a mistrust of court-ordered integration. Southern sociologist John Shelton Reed argues that this individualism is reinforced "by the Evangelical Protestantism to which most Southerners subscribe, a strikingly individualistic form of religion in which, as singer Tom T. Hall sums it up, 'Me and Jesus got our own thing goin' / Don't need anybody to tell us what it's all about.'"<sup>13</sup> The relationship between this individualism and a narrow revivalist emphasis on personal regeneration is, to a degree, highly overblown. As historian Kenneth Bailey argues, it is true that southern evangelicals in the twentieth century were not as concerned as their northern counterparts about issues of labor, poverty, and racial injustice. They were highly involved, however, in debates about blue laws, Darwinism in the public schools, and the government regulation of alcohol. Granted, these debates are largely reactive and impinge upon personal piety. But they were, nonetheless, public and political debates seeking to relate a Christian worldview to the social order. "It is surely true that in this century the concern of

southern Protestants has been more narrowly confined to spiritual regeneration than that of Protestants in the North," Bailey contends. "But the contrast is one of degree. The southern churches have maintained heavy commitments to higher education, to hospitals, to orphanages, and to other humanitarian enterprises both in their region and abroad."<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, to some extent, this critique is precisely on target. Martin Luther King Jr., for example, lamented the White churches that preached the Great Commission, but bifurcated concern for personal regeneration from concern for racial justice. "In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have heard many ministers say: 'Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern,'" King wrote in his 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail." "And I have watched many churches commit themselves to a completely other-worldly religion which makes a strange, un-Biblical distinction between body and soul; between the sacred and the secular."<sup>15</sup> And yet, conservative evangelicals were also castigating evangelical apathy to social issues based on an appeal to more "spiritual" matters of personal salvation. Carl Henry, for instance, called such "the most embarrassing evangelical divorce"—meaning an unbiblical divorce between personal salvation and its social and cosmic implications.<sup>16</sup> But, for Henry and the Southern Baptists, while personal regeneration could not be bandied about as an excuse for social apathy, the church must nonetheless keep the New Testament focus on the priority of personal regeneration.

Ironically, it is this focus on the so-called "individualistic" doctrine of the new birth that pierced the consciences

of southern White evangelicals. Charles Marsh, for example, speaks of his father's legacy, a testimony that could be told of countless other southern Christian conservatives. Marsh writes that his father's mind on racial issues was changed by such actions as Graham's desegregation of his southern crusades and by Carl Henry's editorials demonstrating that regeneration demanded love for the brethren across whatever racial divides culture had erected. "Billy Graham, to whom my father attributed his own salvation—certainly much more than Bobby Kennedy or Lyndon Johnson—stirred his uneasy conscience into a willingness to change, if not to see change as God-ordained."<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Marsh notes, the appeal to orthodox theology did something that Robert Kennedy's Justice Department could never do on its own:

The federal government we could still vilify, for reasons painfully obvious in a state where 'Hell No, I Won't Forget!' bumper stickers could still be bought at most gas stations. But the rebuke of evangelical leaders like Billy Graham and Carl F. H. Henry, or American missionaries overseas, made my father wince with shame. 'Our people listen to the radio, they read the newspaper,' wrote a Southern Baptist missionary in Ghana. 'And some even have a television. They know what is happening today. It is impossible to explain why a black person can't worship in a Baptist church in America when you send us out here to tell him that Jesus loves them.'<sup>18</sup>

And so racial progressives called on conservative churches to consider the implications of personal regeneration and the Great Commission. In 1954, immediately following the *Brown* Supreme Court decision, the SBC Christian Life Commission began its report to the Convention

with the “foundations” for Southern Baptist social concerns. Under the heading of “The Primary Need in Human Affairs,” the CLC told Southern Baptists,

The first need of man in human affairs is divine regeneration. It is a commonplace truth among us that righteousness among men depends upon men made righteous by the ‘washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.’ We must continue to preach the necessity of man’s spiritual relationship to God by the new birth. If we should ever weaken our message at this point our strength will fail and our works decay.<sup>19</sup>

The CLC was sure to affirm that they held no Social Gospel theology. And yet, the report continued, personal regeneration had social ramifications: “The Christian’s treatment of his brother in business, industry, politics, race, or any other relationship cannot be passed off as a social matter for which he has no responsibility.”<sup>20</sup>

In like manner, CLC head Foy Valentine appealed to Southern Baptists in the 1960s to see how incongruent their zeal for evangelism was with support for Jim Crow, citing the research of the SBC Home Mission Board’s C.E. Autrey. “I think the race issue and our attitude toward it is curbing evangelism as nothing else is,” Valentine cites Autrey. “There are many contributing factors to the decline in baptisms in recent years, but I think the basic and major contributing factor is the race issue because I don’t think you can love and hate with the same heart.”<sup>21</sup> Valentine likewise cited the testimony of Texas Baptists serving in Nigeria with the SBC Foreign Mission Board. “We know from personal experience after sixteen years as missionaries in Africa that no religion which preaches or practices racism has

any hope of success there,” Valentine cites from a letter from missionaries John and Virginia Mills. “No amount of sacrificial giving or praying or sending of missionaries can compensate for failure at this point.”<sup>22</sup> Such arguments proved persuasive to a people whose culture taught them segregation, but whose Bibles taught them the Great Commission.

Increasingly, Southern Baptists and other evangelicals began to wonder how the two could co-exist. Southern Seminary Old Testament scholar J. J. Owens, for instance, traced his own commitment to integration in part to a personal experience of the collision between Jim Crow and John 3:16:

We had a brilliant student on campus, and his wife needed to go to a hospital. He was a Southern Baptist, converted in a Southern Baptist mission program in his own country. Then he came over here to go to school. His wife came with him. She was not permitted to even be entered into the Baptist hospital because she was black. That, you know, that gets over me. What does Christianity mean if it doesn’t mean, at the very least you can take someone in who is one of our own?<sup>23</sup>

Similarly, James L. Monroe, pastor of Miami’s Riverside Baptist Church during the racial tensions of the 1960s, explained that “the pleas of our missionaries” were what changed his mind about segregation. “It seemed to me that if my prejudice would keep even one soul from finding the Savior or add one ounce to the tremendous burdens already borne by our missionaries it was a price too big to pay.”<sup>24</sup> For Monroe, this was not simply a pragmatic decision to support the “program” of world missions. It was a profoundly theological change of heart. “As I first approached the Scriptures, I had the feeling that I might find some-

thing to support the South's position," he confessed. "After all, many sincere Bible-believing Christians are staunch segregationists and believe firmly in white supremacy."<sup>25</sup> After working through the common biblical themes of the image of God, the Adamic origin of humanity, and the impartiality of the Spirit in regenerating men and women from every race, Monroe concluded that he could have his White supremacy or his evangelical theology, but he could not have both. "Beneath the withering heat of the Bible truth, what faith I had left in white supremacy faded away," he wrote. "I was faced with a choice: accept Southern tradition or the Word of God. What else could a Christian do?"<sup>26</sup>

The same is true of conservative patriarch W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, who once notoriously defended racial segregation in strident terms before the South Carolina state legislature. In 1968, however, after being elected president of the SBC, Criswell reversed course and preached a sermon, "The Church of the Open Door," that called on First Dallas to accept members of all races. Again, Criswell pointed to the biblical doctrines of the new birth and the free offer of the gospel as the catalyst to convincing him that the liberals and moderates had the biblical high-ground on the question of race relations:

Then I said, 'Down here at the church, how shall it be? For I stand up in this pulpit and preach the gospel of the Son of God. I press an appeal for Jesus on the basis of what He has done to save us from our sins. Then shall I stand here afraid that a man might accept that appeal and might accept that invitation whose pigment is different from mine? Here I am, preaching the gospel of the Son of God and the grace of Jesus! What if, down one of these aisles, comes a little girl from the

Buckner Home [the Texas Baptist children's home], and she is black. How could I explain to that child in a thousand years that I did not really mean what I said? You go back to your pew and you go out to some other place!<sup>27</sup>

Chappell compares the SBC to the national Democratic Party of the same era "who saw black voters in the North and new allies abroad as more valuable than the aging, shrinking minority of white southern fire-eaters."<sup>28</sup> And yet, the historical evidence shows no such cold calculation on the part of southern religious conservatives. Instead, southern evangelicals increasingly saw their soteriology in conflict with their popular anthropology. Southern Baptist conservatives had a legacy of White supremacy of over one hundred years. And yet they also had a legacy of conversionist theology that was even older than that—indeed, as old as the church universal. When asked to choose between Jim Crow and Billy Graham, the mainstream of Southern Baptist conservatives chose Graham, because they sensed that God was on his side.

The "extreme individualism" of evangelical revivalism—especially in its baptistic form—has been deplored extensively, by evangelicals as well as by their critics, for its numbing effects on social action. And yet it was this revivalist individualism that served as the lynchpin in the appeal for civil rights to the uneasy conscience of southern White evangelicals. Foy Valentine, for instance, was on strong biblical footing when he applied the doctrines of personal regeneration, confrontational evangelism, and individual judgment to the quest for justice for African Americans:

Avoid the paternalism which treats another as a thing and not really

as an individual. In conversation shun those categorical stereotypes which subtly downgrade those of other races or nationalities. Follow the wise counsel of James to let your speech be without offense in conveying prejudice, fomenting strife, expressing hate, or encouraging hostility. Bear positive Christian witness concerning the worth of every man before God, remembering that the basic Bible truth of the worth of the individual will never be generally applied to the victim of prejudice unless it is spelled out in concrete and minute detail.<sup>29</sup>

This “individualistic” argument is consonant with a biblical theology of the new covenant promise, in which Yahweh promised regeneration and sanctification to all the people of God, individually, by writing his law into their hearts (Jer 31:31-34).<sup>30</sup> Yes, southern segregationists had difficulty with the implication of claiming “the other” as brothers, but so did Jewish first-century Christians, who still wanted to cling to their covenantal identity as ethnic Israel (e.g. Gal 2:13-15). Thus, the New Testament apostles and prophets consistently appealed to personal regeneration as meaning that God’s people come into his Kingdom through the Spirit, not through tribal identity or genetic inheritance (John 1:12). The fact that Samaritans and Gentiles experience the regenerating action of the Spirit affirms that God is no respecter of persons, and is not limited to the boundaries of circumcised flesh or racially specific bloodlines (1 Pet 1:17).

This is because regeneration was not just a supernatural initiation into a new religion. It meant union with the Messiah who bore the Spirit of holiness. Ethnic rivalry in the New Testament was not treated as a social problem, but as the key stumbling block to salvation in Christ. This is because those who gloried in their ethnic distinctiveness were missing the

central claim of redemption—union with Christ and identity in him. For the apostle Paul, for instance, Peter’s tacit endorsement of Jewish supremacy was not just bigotry. It endangered the truth that “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:19-20).<sup>31</sup> Similarly, the apostle Paul does not devalue the tribal badge of circumcision to the Gentile Colossian believers. Instead, he affirms that they have been circumcised through the Spirit of regeneration, and therefore share “the circumcision of Christ” through union with him in baptism (Col 2:10-12). It is this Christological reality that enables Paul to write, “Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free” (Col 3:11a). This is because New Testament soteriology affirms that “Christ is all, and in all” (Col 3:11b).

Thus Billy Graham was not an historical anomaly. As Graham biographer William Martin notes, Graham, like other conservative evangelicals of his day, made numerous public statements eschewing social action, usually relating his political discomfort to his pessimistic dispensationalist eschatology and the priority of evangelism over social reform. And yet he was surprisingly progressive on the question of race.<sup>32</sup> Graham insisted on the desegregation of his southern crusades, not because of an elaborate political theory of natural rights, but because of his theology of the indiscriminate offer of personal salvation. Before Graham could articulate the fact that segregation was judicially and socially unjust, he could recognize that it was serving as a stumbling block to the proclamation of the gospel to unbelieving individuals of various races and economic classes. Carl



Henry applied the message to the context of racial reconciliation in twentieth century America: “Because it champions the redemptive realities inherent in the Christian religion, evangelical Christianity will vindicate the judgment that the Negro is not only politically an equal but also spiritually a brother.”<sup>33</sup>

This theological underpinning enabled the ethos of evangelical revivalism—even when appropriated by non-evangelicals such as King—to transform the terms of the debate away from the revolutionary options presented by both the Ku Klux Klan and Black militants such as the Nation of Islam. This is consistent with the long heritage of English and American revival movements that spurred the church to social and political engagement without sacrificing the priority of personal regeneration and evangelism. “The Wesley and Whitefield revivals were tremendous in calling for individual salvation, and thousands upon thousands were saved,” noted evangelical apologist Francis Schaeffer. “Yet even secular historians acknowledge that it was the social results coming out of the Wesley revival that saved England from its own form of the French revolution.”<sup>34</sup> Maintaining the priority of personal regeneration obviously is not a stand-alone antidote to racial bigotry. After all, Billy Graham’s racial progressiveness was pioneering among southern clergymen. Even so, the sound commitment to evangelistic fervor among conservative evangelicals, when combined with a serious call to reflective biblical engagement on matters such as racial reconciliation, can result—and has resulted—in the transformation of hearts and minds needed to bring about a transformation of the culture.

Conservative Christianity also was

better equipped theologically than Protestant liberalism to understand what was at stake in the civil rights movement. Evangelicals knew that human nature was not perfectible through education, governmental regulation, or any other social policy. Conservative evangelicals rejected the Social Gospel construct that sin is ultimately societal and structural. Instead, they understood that sin was, first of all, a perversion of the human nature in all of its aspects—the mind, the heart, and the will. Thus, conservative evangelical Christianity could make sense of hypocrisy in the form of the Bible-quoting Klansman or the “family values” espousing Citizens’ Council leader. When convinced of the essential evil of White supremacy, conservative evangelicalism was also equipped theologically to see what was at stake—not just in terms of social upheaval, but also in terms of eschatological judgment. After all, if evangelical revivalists knew anything, it was the biblical scene of the Judgment Seat. And they remembered that the criterion for judgment in Jesus’ depiction of that scene is the treatment of “the least of these my brothers” (Matt 25:40).

In the contemporary context, few evangelicals would not affirm that racial justice is an implication of a conversionist soteriology. Racist sentiments are as taboo as profanity in all but the most backward of churches. An evangelical who objected to Black faces on his denominational publishing house materials would now be considered a fool—if not an unbeliever. Indeed, in the year 2000 Southern Baptists revised their confessional document, *The Baptist Faith and Message*, specifically naming racism as a sin against God. In the confession, the revivalist roots of racial reconciliation are evident: “The

sacredness of personality is evident in that God created man in his own image, and that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of Christian respect and love.”<sup>35</sup>

But the issues are now about more than racial tension. The contemporary cultural scene features a multitude of liberationist groups all eager to claim the social legitimacy of the civil rights movement. Chief among these, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, is the homosexual rights movement. The cultural left now calls for “same-sex marriage” based on earlier arguments for the legalization of interracial marriage.<sup>36</sup> As a result, same-sex couples perform acts of civil disobedience by “marrying” in ceremonies across the nation, comparing their action with Rosa Park’s refusal to move to the back of an Alabama bus. The activists sing “We Shall Overcome” and cast their opponents as George Wallace standing in the wedding chapel door.<sup>37</sup> Mainline denominations are rupturing over the question of homosexual ordination—with “progressives” arguing that they are the heirs of the southern preachers who courageously integrated their churches. Some evangelicals may wonder if they are not right. Is conservative Christianity on the wrong side of history again? As the debate rages, both sides seek to claim the legacy of the civil rights movement.<sup>38</sup> The problem with the homosexual liberationist appropriation is that it does not have—and can never gain—the moral legitimacy that the civil rights movement appropriated from evangelical conversionism. Not only does the homosexual liberationist movement fail to understand the Scriptures; they fail also to understand the civil rights movement.

The civil rights movement could appeal to the American consciences through the churches to a shared memory of Christian conversionism. The homosexual rights movement, by contrast, can only succeed by wiping out such memory. The homosexual liberationists not only contradict the biblical witness about the immorality of “gay” sex, they also ground their arguments in unbiblical presuppositions such as biological determinism and the impossibility of transformation for those tempted by same-sex attractions. Such arguments are confounded by the clear testimony of Scripture (i.e., 1 Cor 6:9-11)—but also by the lyrics of every evangelical invitation hymn. Conversionist Christianity speaks to this question, but this time on the side of the traditionalists because the gay liberation movement in mainline Protestantism stands firmly in the tradition of the segregationist churches of the Jim Crow-era South. The “Amos and Andy” culture is now the “Will and Grace” culture, but cultural captivity is cultural captivity. The spirit of the age once consoled bigots by assuring them that Black people would be better off “with their own kind.” The spirit of the age now consoles White liberals that homosexuals really cannot change and do not need the gospel of repentance and faith. Whether to unrepentant racists or to unrepentant homosexuals, the message is always the same—“You will not surely die” (Gen 3:4). Some evangelical pastors in the Jim Crow era once mistakenly thought they could preach the gospel and still stand in the church-house door blocking people for whom Christ died from hearing his gospel. And now some bishops and pastors mistakenly think they can administer the sacraments and stand in the church-house door blocking

those for whom Christ died from experiencing the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Sexual libertarian bishops now have the endorsement of the culture—but White supremacist pastors once shared just such legitimacy in the old South.

As evangelicals face the perennial temptation to surrender to the cultural captivity of the church, be it from the hateful white sheets of the Ku Klux Klan or from the hateful rainbow flags of the Gay Liberation Front, we must remember the lessons of Jim Crow. We must remember that we drowned out his hateful message not just with the strains of “We Shall Overcome” on the courthouse steps, but also with the strains of “Just As I Am” in our revival tents. That means evangelicals must continue to reaffirm our commitments to biblical soteriology and biblical ecclesiology. Perhaps this is what is missing from so much religious right posturing on the same-sex “marriage” debate thus far. Evangelical pulpits communicate well the disordered nature of same-sex unions. But too often, conservative evangelicals sound like a “constituency” arguing for our rights to the status quo. We speak about what is at stake for “our” marriages and “our” families—and that is all true. But conservative evangelicals should speak more about what is at stake for those tempted to follow the lie of homosexual liberation. The Apostle Paul reveals the outcome—death (Rom 1:32). That truth should make our hands tremble and our eyes moisten. We should oppose same-sex “marriage” not just because we believe Romans 1, but also because we believe John 3:16. And the culture should see us as broken-hearted revivalists, not just outraged moralists. We should not see homosexuality simply as a threat to “family values” in the

abstract. We should also weep that it is a Roman road to hell—for real people with real faces, names, and church letters. That means our churches ought to be Kingdom outposts for redemptive transformation—where those plagued with homosexual attractions can find fellow sinners who can love them, and lead them to the joys of fidelity, repentance, and healing. Evangelical theology should be revivalist enough to welcome repentant homosexuals to Christ—and to welcome them to a Spirit that can conform them to the image of Christ (Rom 8:29). In that sense, our churches should learn to sing once again “We Shall Overcome” right along with “Just As I Am.”

### **Evangelical Communitarianism and the Quest for Racial Justice: The Doctrine of the Church**

Another common myth about the civil rights era is that the segregationist side was deeply intermeshed with the life of local congregations in the South. The Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens’ Council were not Christian “fundamentalist” groups. Instead, these hate groups were led by men who most often attacked church leadership and even church attendance because they feared the way Christian orthodoxy often led to a softening of racial hatred. In short, they were what contemporary evangelical church-growth leaders would call “the unchurched.” As one White Citizens’ Council publication put it, “The preacher is our most deadly enemy.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, David Chappell notes that an anti-ecclesiological sentiment pervaded the White supremacist and segregationist movements, found in such slogans as “Thank God There Is No Law Which Requires Church Attendance.”<sup>40</sup> This anti-clericalism was remarkable in

a culture given what historian Kenneth Bailey calls “the exalted status of the clergyman in southern society.”<sup>41</sup>

The civil rights movement understood that moral legitimacy required more than constitutional guarantees of individual liberties, and more than a natural rights argument for human dignity. In taking on the established traditions of the old South, they must cast an alternative vision of human community. The Social Gospel provided a part of this vision with its broad understanding of the Kingdom of God as “the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man,” a slogan used so often by mainline political leaders in the twentieth century that newspaper reporters began to refer to it by its acronym “BOMFOG.”<sup>42</sup> Martin Luther King Jr. captured this basic human communitarian longing with his persistent rhetorical vision of the “beloved community.” For King, this community vision was grounded more in Walter Rauschenbusch’s concept of the Kingdom of God than in a baptistic understanding of the covenant congregation.<sup>43</sup> As historian Fredrik Sunnemark observes, the concept “represents the way the utopian notion of the kingdom of God becomes a definite feature of the daily struggles of King and the civil rights movement.”<sup>44</sup> King’s “beloved community” imagery was present in his rhetorical (and virtually eschatological) vision of the day in which “the sons of slaves and the sons of slaveholders” would “sit down together at the table of brotherhood.”

The communitarian critique of exclusionary White supremacy in the South was a crucial factor in the downfall of Jim Crow. But conservative evangelicals were confronted, not with an abstract definition of “community,” but with the more compelling New Testament doctrine

of the church. Southern Baptist ethicist Henlee Barnette, for instance, pointed out that the popular racist interpretation of passages such as Ephesians 4:3 and 13 on the unity of believers in Christ tried to abstract such unity from the church. “Segregationists interpret this statement as a purely spiritual relationship resulting from mystical union with Christ,” he wrote. “Integrationists give the passage a more comprehensive meaning, pointing out that Paul freely took Jewish converts into the Gentile Christian churches on the basis of faith and not race.”<sup>45</sup> Barnette here pegged an important critique of the segregationist argument—a hermeneutic that was closer to a Gnostic mysticism than to orthodox Baptist ecclesiology. Foy Valentine, for instance, pointed to the Pauline teaching that Christ had broken down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile in the church (Eph 2:13-14) and to Peter’s revelation that the Gentile Cornelius could not be called unclean (Acts 10:28).<sup>46</sup> Segregationists in the South seemed to understand that ecclesial unity would lead ultimately to social and political equality. To combat the ecclesiological arguments of the racial progressives, segregationists had to resort to the tired and pragmatic claim that differing worship styles should keep White and Black Christians apart in their churches. When segregationists did attempt more substantive arguments, they were forced to employ a liberal hermeneutic that evacuated the New Testament text of its clear meaning about the unity of believers in the church. This meant segregationists found themselves severing the reality of the local congregation from the reality of the coming Kingdom of God. As David Chappell recounts, Carey Daniel, segregationist pastor of the First Baptist

Church of West Dallas, could not argue that there would be racial segregation in the eternal state. And so he pointed to the discontinuity of marriage and childbearing in the age to come to argue, “There are some things which are perfectly right and proper on earth which would be wrong in heaven, including racial segregation.”<sup>47</sup>

Such segregationist arguments could not help but ring hollow among southern evangelicals who saw their Sunday gatherings as, in the words of hymn-writer Fanny Crosby, “a foretaste of glory divine.”<sup>48</sup> Revivalist White congregations, after all, were filled on any given Sunday with worshippers singing “When We All Get to Heaven.” They also were acutely aware of the New Testament imagery of the church as the “household of God” (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15), a theme that, again, emerged consistently in southern evangelical hymnody.<sup>49</sup> Even more important, was the emphasis on “brotherhood,” not just as an abstract concept of neighborly kindness, but the specific “brotherhood” of the church, which evangelicals were taught to believe transcended all earthly considerations. Historian Randy Sparks argues that the “counter-culture” of the working class Protestant congregations in the Deep South carried an incipient threat to White supremacy from as early as the 1800s in churches that received slaves as members— since baptizing African Americans and calling them “brother” and “sister” meant that a racist ideology would be hard to maintain long-term on theological or biblical grounds.<sup>50</sup> As essayist Wendell Berry points out, it is hard to overestimate “the moral predicament of the master who sat in church with his slaves, thus attesting his belief in the immortality of the souls of people whose bodies he owned and used.”<sup>51</sup>

Such theological tensions were negotiated by the time of the civil rights movement by the almost universal experience of racially-segregated congregations in the South.

And yet, this could not be ideologically tenable long-term, especially for Baptists, whose distinctive believers’ church theology mandated an intimate connection between soteriology and ecclesiology. Thus, the appropriately individualistic arguments about the “souls” of Black people could not stop there. For these evangelicals, believers were not just “souls” on their way to eternity. They were “brothers” responsible to approximate in their congregations the coming messianic kingdom. This is consistent with a New Testament emphasis on both soteriology and ecclesiology as subsets of Christology. The priority of personal regeneration does not mean necessarily an internalized, individualized pietism, since regeneration is inherently cosmic and communitarian. The Old Testament prophetic hope of regeneration is about the restoration of the Israelite nation (Ezek 37:1-28). With this background firmly in place, Jesus assumes Nicodemus should recognize the hope of the “new birth” as the inheritance of the Kingdom of God (John 3:3,10), which every pious Israelite would have seen as a community hope—the restoration of the nation under the kingship of the Davidic son. Thus, the New Testament uses the same term for the individual experience of Spirit renewal (Titus 3:5) and the cosmic restoration of the creation (Matt 19:28). This dynamic of personal salvation resulting in interpersonal reconciliation was at work as early as the Jerusalem Council recounted in the Book of Acts. The gathered disciples called for social reconciliation between

Jewish and Gentile believers precisely because both had experienced the Davidic covenant blessings of the one Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8, 14-19). Likewise, the apostle Paul could appeal to Jews that “Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body” because they were “partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Eph 3:6). Thus, the apostle Paul considers the racial unity of the church at Ephesus to be more than a commendable manifestation of neighbor love. It is a revelation that Jesus is assembling his cosmic kingdom over which he rules as head (Eph 1:20-22).

The unified church is therefore a sign to the demonic powers (Eph 3:10) of the triumph of Jesus as the true Israel (Eph 2:11-13, 19-20), the last Adam (Eph 2:15-17), and the final Temple (Eph 2:21-22). Racial division in the church in the New Testament is not a matter of ethics; it is a matter of Christology and ecclesiology: “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor 12:13). Thus, segregationist evangelicals felt the sting of the accusation that they would have a “hard time in heaven” with a Kingdom assembled from every tribe, tongue, nation, and language (Rev 5:9-10). The sting was the same delivered by James to the first-century church, divided not only over the issue of race but also that of class, when he asked how Christians could exclude from their assembly those God had chosen as “heirs of the kingdom” (James 2:5).

This ecclesiological focus of racial reconciliation is perhaps the greatest ongoing failure of contemporary evangelicalism to learn the lessons of the civil rights movement. Conservative Protestants have appropriated the soteriology

of racial reconciliation much more easily than they have appropriated the ecclesiology of racial reconciliation. Even when evangelical activists have embraced the need for racial reconciliation, it is most often in the model of the massive parachurch “crusade” (such as the “Promise Keepers” men’s movement’s admirable work in this area) rather than that of the local congregation. For the most part, churches are still divided—perhaps even more divided—between suburban White congregations and urban Black congregations. This stratification is not only by racial categories, but by socioeconomic categories as well, with entire sectors of evangelicals commending a church-planting model based on racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic homogeneity. Conservative evangelicals have succeeded admirably in reaching minority communities—even as mainline Protestantism splinters into an “identity politics” model of competing ethnic and sexual caucus groups within their denominational canopies. And yet, the ecclesiological conscience is uneasy still. After all, it would have been relatively uncontroversial to plant Gentile Christian churches and Messianic Jewish synagogues across the first-century Roman Empire. What *was* controversial was one community with one people—all claiming one Spirit, one King, one inheritance, and one identity in Christ. The ecclesiology of the racial progressives shamed the racist churches precisely because it was not an implication, but an explicit theme of the New Testament. If contemporary evangelicals are to claim this biblical legacy, it will mean moving away from thinking of congregations as “African American” and “White,” or “white-collar” and “blue-collar.” It will mean that local congregations must

model the way in which a multinational messianic kingdom will reflect eternal reconciliation between diverse ethnic, economic, racial, and social groups. Such churches might be “multicultural,” but they will empty that word of its current meaning in the lexicons of leftist tribalization. Instead, such churches will testify to the unity of Christ, as members who have nothing else in common point to the regenerative sovereignty of the Spirit and the global scope of the coming reign of Christ. This will mean a rethinking of church outreach and church planting in order to see the church less in terms of a corporate franchise and more in terms of a colony of the Kingdom.

### Conclusion

Joseph Califano, an Italian Catholic Democrat political powerbroker who served in the Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter Presidential Administrations, recalls in his memoirs his exhilaration when, as a young law student, he heard the news of the Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. He was elated precisely because the decision resonated with his already deeply held religious beliefs about the nature of humanity and the impartiality of God. “To me the Court’s decision was as rooted in the Thomistic philosophy and Ignatian values I’d learned at Holy Cross as it was in the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution,” he writes. “I saw the decision as a perfect blending of the spiritual values propounded by the Jesuits and the legal rights propounded by the decidedly secular and predominantly liberal professors at Harvard Law School.”<sup>52</sup> Sadly, it took conservative evangelicals—especially Southern Baptists—far longer to perceive that the call for civil rights

was rooted in Pauline theology and the cherished values of the baptistery and the revival tent.

The arguments for racial reconciliation were persuasive to conservative evangelicals because they appealed to a higher authority than their cultural captivity—the authority of Scripture. And this authority could not be muted by a claim to a “different interpretation” because the racial equality argument was built on premises conservatives already heartily endorsed—the universal love of God for all persons, the unity of the race in Adam, the Great Commission, and the church as the household of God. With this being the case, the legitimacy of segregation crumbled just as the legitimacy of slavery had done in the century before—and for precisely the same reasons. After all, abolition did not win the day through the utopian rhetoric of John Brown and his fellow revolutionaries.<sup>53</sup> Abolitionist arguments did not gain ground so long as they appealed to Enlightenment egalitarianism, while ignoring biblical concepts like sin, atonement, and redemption. More persuasive, however, were the biblical arguments of orthodox Protestants like William Wilberforce in England and Charles G. Finney in the United States, who called slavery what it clearly was: not just an injustice or an inequity, but a sin against God and neighbor and a repudiation of the gospel.

After all, as historian Steven J. Keillor points out, the “biblical” arguments of slaveholders could not legitimize slavery precisely because they were built more on a commitment to regional capitalism than on the biblical text:

The acts of Europeans who argued against their God cannot be blamed on Christianity, its Scriptures or its

God. It did not *advocate* slavery. It commanded believers to work with their own hands and to serve others. An obedient Christian was stripped of the motives for acquiring slaves. In one of his lists of 'the ungodly' the apostle Paul included 'slave traders.' In his list of ungodly Babylon's merchandise, John included the 'bodies and souls of men.'<sup>54</sup>

In this sense, Southern Baptists had been conflicted theologically since 1845, when the Convention, even as it split from the Northern Baptists over slavery, resolved to make evangelism and church-planting among African Americans a major priority.<sup>55</sup>

On the question of racial justice, significant change has happened—and with dramatic results. The typical "moderate" Baptist congregation in the South is most often the picture of gentrified White suburbia, while a rapidly growing segment of Southern Baptist life consists of conservative, evangelical African American, Asian American, and Latino churches. Historians and social scientists have noted that contemporary conservative evangelicals—including Southern Baptists—have articulated a progressive view of race relations, even as they stand counter the culture on other questions, such as gender roles and human sexuality. Some have suggested that this is a culture accommodation—a relatively unexplainable deviation from a racist, sexist fundamentalist's sect's revolt against "pluralism." Historian Andrew Manis, for instance, posits that "concern about race and the changes brought about by the civil rights movement was a catalyst that set in motion the Southern Baptist fundamentalist takeover movement, its involvement with the Religious Right, its support of Ronald Reagan and the Republican party, and its enlistment in

the culture war."<sup>56</sup>

And yet, why not race? Southern Baptists are willing to be clearly counter-cultural on the question of gender roles, so why would they yield to the culture at this point—and not just yield but publicly apologize for a legacy of racial hatred while aggressively reaching out to the African American community? One contemporary Baptist liberal suggests that tomorrow's conservative Southern Baptists will apologize for a complementarian view of gender relations, just as their forebears apologized for a "conservative" view of racial relations.<sup>57</sup> Such a view neglects, however, the fact that Southern Baptists and other conservative evangelicals did not simply bow to the cultural winds on the race issue. Instead, it was conservative evangelical revivalism that, at least in part, *changed* the cultural winds in America on this issue—and did so from a distinctively orthodox theological base. The civil rights movement served to expose that conflicted theology—and to drive conservative southern evangelicals back to the Bible they claimed to believe. These arguments changed the culture of the churches—and ultimately the culture of the South—because they carried with them the authority of the oracles of God. Regenerate hearts ultimately melted before such arguments because in them they heard the voice of their Christ, a voice they found in the Scriptures themselves.

Conservative evangelicals in the South must be careful to remember the ways in which our soteriology and ecclesiology served to chasten our perverted anthropology. It is to our shame that we ignored our own doctrines to advance racial pride. And it is to our further shame that, in so many cases, we needed theological liberals to remind us of what we said we



believed. But we must never consider racial injustice to be a problem solved—or even a uniquely American issue. Jim Crow is not simply a social problem. He is deep within the hearts of fallen human beings—a hatred of one another that can express itself to varying degrees in the segregation of the old South, the death camps at Auschwitz, the Cambodian killing fields, terrorist jihad in the Middle East, or in the subtle self-righteousness of a successful middle-class American churchgoer.

Jim Crow never really dies. His murderous hatred of the brothers is as old as Cain (1 John 3:12-15)—indeed as old as the Serpent of Eden (John 8:44). Jim Crow and his shape-shifting successors should not surprise conservative confessional Christianity. We have ancient doctrines of sin, redemption, and ultimate consummation that warn us such evil exists, and that it will only be defeated ultimately when the messianic Kingdom of Jesus finally overthrows every human Tower of Babel (Dan 2:44). But evangelical theology must move beyond intuitionism to an ongoing and full-orbed examination of how a biblical theology counteracts this persistent temptation to glory in our tribal categories rather than in our identity in Christ. But we do not just need an evangelical theology to frame our thoughts about racial hatred. We need an evangelical missiology that transforms our churches into showcases of the cosmic reconciliation brought about by the triumph of Christ. And we need an evangelical spirituality that is constantly on guard for racial hatred in our own secret thoughts, inclinations, and intentions. Conservative evangelicalism ought always to remember that we did not just find Jim Crow in our universities, our courthouses, and our

lunch counters; we found him in our Sunday school classes, in our pulpits, in our personal prayer times—and in our mirrors. As conservative Christians face the twenty-first century, we must continue the struggle against racial and ethnic hostility, and we must do so with a theologically informed prophetic voice. But we must also remember that racial justice is much more than a socio-political issue. We must maintain our constitutional and legislative guarantees of civil rights, but we must also remember that the cosmic roots of such problems lie where legislation can never reach. Southern Baptist ethicist Foy Valentine was no conservative, and no evangelical. It was he, in fact, who castigated the term “evangelical” as a “Yankee word.”<sup>58</sup> He was theologically deficient at many points, including his response to later ethical challenges such as the scourge of legalized abortion. But Valentine summed up the most profound summation of an evangelical theological approach to racial relations, when he asked Southern Baptists in the era of Jim Crow, “What can Christians do about racial prejudice? Be the church and preach the gospel.”<sup>59</sup>

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jerrold M. Packard, *American Nightmare: The History of Jim Crow* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 159.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>3</sup>For a history of such groups, see Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort* (New York: Guilford, 2000), 33-103.

<sup>4</sup>David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 3. Evangelical Protestants, of

course, rightly would take issue with Chappell's characterization of their most deep-seated convictions as "myth." But Chappell's language further underscores the remarkable nature of his claim. He is not an evangelical partisan, but an outsider observing what he sees as a socio-religious phenomenon.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>7</sup>*Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 1954 (Nashville: Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, 1954), 56.

<sup>8</sup>Charles Marsh, *The Last Days: A Son's Story of Sin and Segregation at the Dawn of a New South* (New York: Basic, 2001), 49.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 173-74.

<sup>10</sup>For an analysis of King's theological commitments in comparison with Protestant liberalism, neo-orthodoxy, and liberation theologies, see Noel Leo Erskine, *King Among the Theologians* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1994).

<sup>11</sup>James J. Thompson Jr., *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 46.

<sup>12</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself* (Waco: Word, 1966), 67.

<sup>13</sup>John Shelton Reed, *Minding the South* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2003), 24-25.

<sup>14</sup>Kenneth K. Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 164.

<sup>15</sup>Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*, ed. William H. Chafe and

Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 189.

<sup>16</sup>Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

<sup>17</sup>Marsh, 255.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 254.

<sup>19</sup>"Forty-Sixth Annual Report of the Christian Life Commission," *Annual of the Southern Baptist Convention*, 1954, 400.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Foy Valentine, *Southern Baptists and the Contemporary Racial Crisis* (Nashville: Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1966), 10. Valentine here cites C.E. Autrey, "Evangelism, Missions, and Race," *Christianity and Race Relations* (Nashville: Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1964), 7.

<sup>22</sup>Valentine, *Southern Baptists and the Contemporary Racial Crisis*, 10. Valentine here cites John and Virginia Mills, "An Open Letter to Texas Baptists," *Baptist Standard*, 24 July 1963, 12.

<sup>23</sup>Transcript of oral history interview by Becky England and Diana Frederick with J. J. Owens, Estill Jones, Henry Turlington, and Wayne Ward, April 1986, James P. Boyce Centennial Library Archives, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

<sup>24</sup>James L. Monroe, "A Southerner's Dilemma," in *Baptists See Black*, ed. Wayne Dehoney (Waco: Word, 1969), 29-30.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 28.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 29.

<sup>27</sup>W. A. Criswell, "The Church of the Open Door," in *Baptists See Black*,

80-81.

<sup>28</sup>Chappell, 147.

<sup>29</sup>Foy Valentine, *The Cross in the Marketplace* (Waco: Word, 1966), 92.

<sup>30</sup>For a defense of the ways the new covenant is—and is not—"individualistic," see Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 219-26. "This is individualism, but not individualism in the bad sense of one who will not have the Lord God reign over him because he says, 'I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul,'" Jewett argues. "Rather, it is individualism in the biblical sense of one who has heard God say, 'I have called you by your name, you are mine.'"

<sup>31</sup>Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *English Standard Version*.

<sup>32</sup>William Martin, *A Prophet with Honor: The Billy Graham Story* (New York: William Morrow, 1991), 362.

<sup>33</sup>Henry, *The God Who Shows Himself*, 71.

<sup>34</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer, *A Christian Manifesto* (Westchester, IL: Crossway, 1982), 65.

<sup>35</sup>*The Baptist Faith and Message*, a statement adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, 14 June 2000, Article III.

<sup>36</sup>See, for instance, Bob Herbert, "Stolen Kisses," *New York Times*, 1 March 2004, A-21.

<sup>37</sup>Homosexual commentator Andrew Sullivan, for instance, equates Massachusetts' legalization of same-sex marriage with the principles of the *Brown v. Board of Education* integration ruling. Andrew Sullivan, "Integration Day," *New York Times*,

17 May 2004, A-25.

<sup>38</sup>Genevieve Wood, an evangelical who represents the conservative Family Research Council told a gathering of African American ministers that homosexual activists “are wrapping themselves in the flag of civil rights.” The *New York Times* frames the controversy in this way: “As debate escalates around same-sex marriage, advocates on both sides are busily seeking support from the same source: black clergy members. Though their pitches are polar opposites, their motives are largely the same. Each seeks the perceived moral authority and the sheen of civil rights that black religious leaders could lend to each cause.” Lynnette Clemetson, “Both Sides Court Black Churches in the Debate Over Gay Marriage,” *New York Times*, 1 March 2004, A-1.

<sup>39</sup>Cited in Randy J. Sparks, *Religion in Mississippi* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 229.

<sup>40</sup>Chappell, 129.

<sup>41</sup>Bailey notes, “As the century progressed, great problems of the age were increasingly relegated to scientists, engineers, and officers of the state. But preachers in the South continued to exercise large roles of public leadership through the 1920s, and until now in some communities. Few southern boys joked about clergymen until in the armed services they learned to revel in the lore of military chaplains. There has not been in the century any demonstration of clerical leadership in the North of such proportions as was rendered by southern clergy in the anti-evolution crusade

and in the Presidential campaign of 1928.” Bailey, 163-64. It might be added, that this southern clergy leadership continued, especially among African Americans, in the civil rights movement.

<sup>42</sup>Journalist Tom Wicker notes the “BOMFOG” abbreviation used by reporters covering the Nelson Rockefeller campaigns for Governor of New York and President of the United States. He recounts that the acronym gradually “came to stand for any passage of supposedly uplifting—especially religious—rhetoric.” Tom Wicker, *George Herbert Walker Bush* (New York: Penguin, 2004), 105.

<sup>43</sup>For an analysis of this idea in the thought of King, see Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1974).

<sup>44</sup>Fredrik Sunnemark, *Ring Out Freedom! The Voice of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 73.

<sup>45</sup>Henlee H. Barnette, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman, 1961), 137-38.

<sup>46</sup>Valentine, *The Cross in the Marketplace*, 93.

<sup>47</sup>Chappell, 109. Chappell here cites Daniel’s pamphlet entitled “God, the Original Segregationist.”

<sup>48</sup>Fanny Crosby, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine,” *The Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 334.

<sup>49</sup>This is seen, for instance, in the gospel song “I’m So Glad I’m a Part of the Family of God” by Bill and Gloria Gaither, which gained popular-

ity especially in southern revivalist churches in the early 1970s.

<sup>50</sup>Sparks, 35, 87.

<sup>51</sup>Wendell Berry, *The Hidden Wound* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989), 16.

<sup>52</sup>Joseph A. Califano, Jr., *Inside: A Public and Private Life* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 65-66.

<sup>53</sup>For a study of the revolutionary utopianism of some nineteenth century abolitionists, see Richard J. Ellis, *The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 17-43.

<sup>54</sup>Steven J. Keillor, *This Rebellious House: American History and the Truth of Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), 40.

<sup>55</sup>“On Colored Population,” Resolution of the Southern Baptist Convention, May 1845. The text of the resolution may be found at [www.sbc.net/resolutions](http://www.sbc.net/resolutions). A more detailed resolution “On Colored People” was passed in 1884, with a specific plea for the planting of churches and the training of African American preachers and deacons.

<sup>56</sup>Andrew Manis, *Southern Civil Religions in Conflict: Civil Rights and the Culture Wars* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2002), 168-69.

<sup>57</sup>Johnny Pierce, “It Is Right to Admit We Might Be Wrong,” *Baptists Today*, September 2003, 7.

<sup>58</sup>Kenneth L. Woodward, “The Evangelicals,” *Newsweek*, 25 October 1976, 76. Historian Joel A. Carpenter chooses Valentine’s “Yankee word” characterization as paradigmatic of the uneasy relationship between Southern Baptist denominational-

ists and American evangelicals in the twentieth century. Joel A. Carpenter, "Is 'Evangelical' a Yankee Word? Relations Between Northern Evangelicals and the Southern Baptist Convention in the Twentieth Century," in *Southern Baptists and American Evangelicals: The Conversation Continues* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1993), 78-99.

<sup>59</sup>Valentine, *The Cross in the Marketplace*, 93.