

Truth Telling at the Table:
The Eucharist and White Supremacy in the Episcopal Church

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The Eucharist is a sacrament of grace, liturgically enacted in words, gestures, and substances meant to recall the executed and resurrected body of Jesus Christ, a Palestinian Jew under political occupation. It calls the assembly into ethical action in solidarity with Jesus, to stand alongside him, and with those who currently suffer in our communities. The Eucharist is crucial for the work of racial justice and holds transformation for those white U.S. American Christians who are seeking to challenge the social and political idolatry of white supremacy. To access the practice of love that the Eucharist leads us to, to recover the vision of God from within the rites of a historically white supremacist tradition, white Episcopalians must engage in the uncomfortable and vital work of truth telling. This project offers an exploration of the racial history of the denomination, and a political liturgics grounded in black liberation theology, sacramental and political theology, and ritual theory. It concludes with suggestions for anti-racist liturgical and pedagogical practice for majority white Episcopal parishes.

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Introduction

Each time we come to your table,
we sound the familiar memory,
“prophets and apostles,
saints and martyrs,”
all of us gathered:
prophets we know, who can
muster righteous indignation,
apostles we know, who do not mind being sent,
even saints, we confess their
“communion” of the living and the dead.

And then martyrs—and our throat tightens a little—
old martyrs before lions
recent martyrs before death squads
and covert government actions.

Martyrs—truth-tellers—witnesses
in dangerous places where trust is at risk
before princes and powers and corporate wealth
telling your truth of goodness of mercy
of peace and justice
of compassion and forgiveness.

So we gather to be truth-tellers—
timid, bewildered, reluctant,
half ready, half asking, “What is truth?”
We ourselves stand alongside Jesus, who is the truth and the
way and the life.

We ourselves give witness as we can, not doubting,
but fearful,
nonetheless sent.¹

¹ Walter Bruggemann, “At Table... Flooded with Memories,” *Prayers for a Privileged People* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008) 99–100.

The Eucharist is a sacrament of grace, liturgically enacted in words, gestures, and substances meant to recall the executed and resurrected body of Jesus Christ, a Palestinian Jew under political occupation. As a mystical, ritual act of the Christian Church, this rite calls the assembly into ethical action in solidarity with Jesus, to stand alongside him, and with those who currently suffer in our communities, those whose pain and death bears witness to a corrupt society. The heart of the sacrament is succinctly expressed in “An Order for Celebrating Holy Eucharist” in *The Book of Common Prayer*: Gather in the Lord’s name, proclaim and respond to the Word of God, pray for the world and the church, exchange the peace, prepare the table, make Eucharist, break the bread, share the gifts of God.² Gather, respond, pray and give peace, make thanks, break bread and share it. These are the moral actions and postures of a spiritually connected community that cares for itself, and cares beyond itself. The connection, compassion, and reflection held in this brief description offer ritual form for a way of being together in the world that is holy and healing. “The eucharistic imagination is a vision of what is really real, the Kingdom of God, as it disrupts the imagination of violence,” wrote William Cavanaugh in *Torture and Eucharist*.³ This disruptive imagination is always desperately needed in a world of suffering and struggle, and the present-day United States is no exception, and there are many areas of social ethics in which a politically disruptive Eucharistic paradigm can be applied. The disruptive imagination of the Eucharist is

² ² The Episcopal Church, *The Book Of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church : Together with the Psalter or Psalms of David According to the Use of the Episcopal Church*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1979) 400–401.

³ William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998) 206.

crucial for the work of racial justice, and the Eucharist holds profound possibility and transformation for those white U.S. American Christians who are seeking to challenge the social and political idolatry of white supremacy, that violent but often unquestioned environment and of our lives and shaper of our collective stories.

The Episcopal Church, one of the oldest Christian traditions in the United States, orients its common life and theology around the Eucharist as the church's principle act of worship. The Eucharist is the formative ritual act that influences our theology, ethics, and ministerial practice. As one of the most historically powerful and affluent Christian traditions in the United States, the Episcopal Church desperately needs to engage its Eucharistic practice as a powerful imaginative disruptor of its legacy of white supremacy, and find in it the sustenance for continued struggle against silence in the face of and outright collusion with ideologies, policies, and actions that marginalize and oppress people of color. The Episcopal Church has strong connections with the civic power structures of the United States—the global technological and nuclear superpower, the colony turned colonizer. The connections to state power are reflected at many levels, from the generational wealth and influence retained in the Episcopal Church in its economic legacy tracing back to an early capitalist empire of human slave labor, to the 2017 conflict over the use of the National Cathedral in the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump, to the fundamental polity and organizational structures of the church, which mirror the attitudes and economics of the country. As a tradition that centers the Eucharist, the sacrament of a colonized body that was broken for the eternal life and divine reconciliation for all, the Episcopal Church inhabits a conflicted space, suspended in the tension of the gospel and state religion.

The 2015 General Convention of the Episcopal Church highlighted the need for the denomination to focus on racial reconciliation. The plan, titled “Becoming the Beloved Community,” outlines a four part strategic commitment to: 1) Telling the truth about the church and race; 2) Proclaiming the dream of beloved community; 3) Practicing the way of love; and 4) Repairing the breach in society and institutions. The plan is multifaceted and interdisciplinary, calling for engagement in education, worship, vision and leadership, social and ethical participation, and ultimately, spiritual transformation. “The Beloved Community” phrase is best known in the work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., first publicly used in his “Birth of a New Nation” sermon in 1957 and expounded in *Stride Toward Freedom* and other speeches. Originally phrased in the work of Josiah Royce, and adapted as a concrete Christian social vision, the beloved community was, for King, “a realistic, achievable goal that could be attained by a critical mass of people committed to and trained in the philosophy and methods of nonviolence.” This community would refuse to engage in war, oppression, and racism, and work together to end poverty and violence.⁴

The third area of the denominational plan, “Practicing the Way of Love,” includes a proposal for liturgical formation, affirming that “Our commitment to racial healing and transformation at all levels demands that we gather and commission liturgical resources so that our prayers contribute to healing the heart of a broken world.”⁵ While resource

⁴ “The Beloved Community,” *The King Philosophy*, <http://www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy> (Accessed 12 October 2018).

⁵ “Becoming the Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church’s Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice.” https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/becoming_beloved_community_commitment_and_plan_1.pdf (2017):19.

adaptation for pastoral need, social events, and particular communities is a gift to the church, the liturgical resources of truth telling, proclamation, practice, and repair are already present within the Eucharistic liturgies of the *Book of Common Prayer* and other currently approved resources. The work of *Becoming the Beloved Community* is inherent to the Eucharist itself, if the church will see and enact it. In spite of the ways that the church has functioned as an agent of white supremacy and oppression, and in spite of the ways that our traditions and practices have helped to reinforce evil and complacent social practice, the Eucharist in the Episcopal Church is by no means fully compromised as a white supremacist rite. It is far more ancient and powerful than the immediate context of its practice, more ancient and powerful than the institutions and empires that have celebrated it, however ethically compromised their practice may be. To access the practice of love and repair of the breach that the Eucharist leads us to, to recover the vision of God from within the rites of a historically white supremacist tradition, benefitting from and complicit in the work of the British and U.S. American empires, requires white Episcopalians to engage in the uncomfortable and vital work of truth telling and proclamation of the dream.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams demonstrated the importance of the Anglican Church's truth-telling in 2006, when the church formally apologized for its economic benefit from the slave trade. He said,

The Body of Christ is not just a body that exists at any one time; it exists across history and we therefore share the shame and the sinfulness of our predecessors, and part of what we can do, with them and for them in the Body of Christ, is prayerful acknowledgment of the failure that is part of us, not just of some distant 'them'... To speak here of repentance and apology is not words alone; it is part of our witness to the Gospel, to a world that needs to hear that the past must be faced and healed and cannot be ignored ... by doing so we are actually discharging our responsibility to preach good news, not simply to look backwards in awkwardness

and embarrassment, but to speak of the freedom we are given to face ourselves, including the unacceptable regions of ... our history.⁶

Without the willingness to tell the truth about our past and present, there can be no freedom for the church in the future. Williams's description of an active witness and ownership of moral failure hints at the rich possibilities of liturgics and ritual as speech-acts that bridge us into an alternative reality.

This first section of this project will lay a foundation through historic overview of the function of anti-black racism in the United States, from colonial constructions of race long preceding the founding of this country, to the cultural forces at work in the Civil War and Reconstruction, to the terror and oppression of the Jim Crow era, to the Civil Rights movement, and the continued struggles for justice that have followed in the past half century. This section gives attention to the ideologies and theologies that justified white supremacy, as well as the relationship of the Episcopal Church to movements for or against racial liberation and equality.

In the second section, critical race theory and the Black Liberation Theology of James Cone provide cultural and ideological analysis of the situation of America. With insights from bell hooks and Dwight Hopkins, this will present an intersectional perspective on the relationship of class, race, and capitalist economic systems. This section will also explore the difference in theological perspectives that comes from racial differences, the subjectivity and ethical implication of theological reflection, and the vital

⁶ Stephen Bates, "The Church Apologizes for Benefitting from Slave Trade," <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/feb/09/religion.world>, 9 February 2006, (Accessed 12 October 2018).

importance of embodiment as a robust part of understanding Christ, one another, and the Eucharist.

Next, the anthropological lens offers insight into ritual as a human practice, and its role in forming communities and creating meaning, identity, and ethics. Rituals offer an experience outside the realm of daily life, presenting an alternative structuring of time, power relations, roles in a community, and symbolic significance that makes ordinary places, persons, or things extraordinary. Through this lifting out of the norm through ritual, communities are present with an opportunity to envision a different way of being, a possibility for transformation. Finally, I examine rituals as a maker and reinforcer of white supremacy, particularly seen in lynching as a form of white group identity making, terrorism toward people of color, and a form of idolatrous ritualization.

The fourth section of this project engages with the political liturgical theology of William Cavanaugh, Bruce T. Morrill, M. Shawn Copeland, and Katie Grimes, four Roman Catholic thinkers whose political and sacramental theologies mutually inform one another. Cavanaugh's conception of the Mystical Body of Christ and its political implications under political oppression connects with Morrill's political liturgies. Grimes' antiracist sacramental theology offers insights into the specifics of ritual performance in the Eucharist, and the ethics and community identity indicated in the performative participation. Finally, Copeland's womanist body theology weaves together Jesus Christ, particularly experienced in the Eucharist, with the black experience in America.

The final portion of this project explores the need for anti-racist theological pedagogy and intentional liturgical emphasis on social ethics in the parish setting. Here, I

bring together the liberation pedagogical thought of Paolo Freire and bell hooks with analysis of existing liturgical materials in the Episcopal Church and suggestions for teaching and incorporation of these materials. Alongside a case study of teaching and liturgy in a parish context, the practical theological component offers suggestions for adaptation and an apology for leading this engagement with systemic oppression and theologically grounded liberation work as a responsibility of Christian leadership in education, preaching, and liturgics.

The Work of Race in History: A Brief Overview

In order to understand the theological and ethical role of the Christian church, particularly the Episcopal Church, in resisting white supremacy, historical exploration is necessary. The practices and beliefs of the church are historically contingent. Understanding its complicity in the formation of systems of oppression and past efforts toward liberation gives an opportunity for self-awareness and informed practice for today's believers. The existence of race and race-based oppression are also historically contingent. They are manufactured social constructs, created to serve empire and economics through a thorough and detailed ideology of racial supremacy that has been shown to adapt and recreate itself for different cultures, regions, and eras of United States history.

Colonial Constructions of Race

White Western Christianity was a key political and cultural force in the establishment of the transatlantic slave trade and the generations of enslavement that founded the North American economy and social structure. As religious historian Edward J. Blume notes, "Any look at the history of religion in the United States will show that religious ideas and leaders, biblical interpretations and renderings, and spiritual artwork were central in the manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of whiteness."⁷ The rhetoric used in the social construct of race and the legitimation of slavery was fundamentally theological, from claims of differently created and ordered classes of human beings, to the interpretively flawed argument basing slavery as a consequence of

⁷ Edward J. Blume, "Forum: American Religion and Whiteness," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Winter 2009) 4.

the curse of Noah's son, Ham, in Genesis 9, the Christian tradition and scripture was used to develop association of light skin with moral purity and dark skin with sinfulness. Biological diversity was made to signify order of creation and dignity and justify the power structures of white supremacy and chattel slavery. Descriptions of visual differences among peoples of the world were not unique to the 15th century, but the codification of such differences into racial categories got its start in this time period. The categories of black and white served political, economic, and religious purpose. As the western Europeans sought to expand their empires to new lands, funding expeditions across the globe, the construal of darker skinned peoples as "other" and "less than" justified the acquiring of their lands.⁸ The function of race in empirical conquest became all the more evil with the development of the Atlantic slave trade, the ultimate form of this land grabbing and displacement, which justified itself on the premise of racism.

In her exploration of the white Christianity which upheld systemic racism and the transatlantic slave trade, Kelly Brown Douglas describes white supremacist theology and ideology in the creation of race and racial hierarchy. The grand narrative of Anglo-Saxon supremacy provided a de-historicized vision of heroic founding fathers and the creation of a visionary new American project. This abstracting work of whiteness, stripping ideas from their concrete consequences and contexts, developed the civil religion of the United States. The use of an abstract theological interpretation of salvation as beyond earth and disconnected from the embodied experience of humanity yielded a self-justifying posture toward the harm done to African slaves. "Slaveholders rationalized that the benefit the

⁸ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 37.

slaves received from Christianization—that is, the assurance of salvation—far outweighed the brutality of slavery.”⁹ It requires a committed otherworldly sense of the Christ and his work of salvation to permit slaveholding white Christians to ignore the realities of immediate oppression of their neighbors, the cruelty being suffered, and the impact of physical and emotional trauma on their victims. This paradigm certainly left no space to consider how the conditions of slavery might be at odds with Jesus’ ministry to the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed.

As evangelism became part of the social justification of slavery, Christian baptism and identity were themselves twisted to reinforce slavery. Katie Grimes writes,

Baptism served slavery in the following ways: it severed the kinship ties of the women and men it helped to enslave, it re-branded their bodies with marks of white ownership, it coerced slaves into Christian community, it served to infantilize enslaved adult women and men, it aggrandized white women and men as masters of both heaven and earth, and it helped to make and maintain race.¹⁰

Instead of a rite of initiation calling the new believer to a life in Christ, baptism functioned politically and economically to force the new “believer” into a life in white supremacy. Rather than a rite that led believers to “taking on a new identity and new obligations, as a disciple of Jesus,” as the Episcopal Church currently understands the sacrament, slave baptisms contorted this devotion to Christ into a devotion also to slave masters and the theologically self-justifying power structures of chattel slavery.¹¹ In their

⁹ Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994) 12.

¹⁰ Katie Grimes, “Breaking the Body of Christ: The Sacraments of Initiation in a Habitat of White Supremacy,” *Political Theology*, 18 no 1 (Feb 2017) 24.

¹¹ James F. Turrell, “The Rites of Christian Initiation of 1979 and the Present-Day Episcopal Church,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 61, no. 1 (Christmas 2017): 162 and Grimes, 26–27.

discipleship of oppression, the Apostle Paul's injunctions to slaves was the primary biblical teaching, and obedience and submission to the system of abuse and social control were, according to whites, the marks of holiness. Historian Albert J. Raboteau highlights the ways in which slaves' religious practice and theological understanding resisted and cut through the false gospel of white supremacy. The key narrative of the Exodus story, in particular, was a spiritual teaching of both comfort and resistance to theologies and power structures that served only to oppress African Americans.¹²

In his account of Prince Henry the Navigator and the budding racial politics of early Portuguese colonial exploration, Willie James Jennings weaves together the ethos of expansion in 15th century Europe, the need for and development of a racial hierarchy, and the theological shift used to justify colonialism and enslavement. Prince Henry's royal chronicler, Gomes Eanes de Azurara identifies African slaves as beasts, by the providence of God.¹³ This early invocation of theological language demonstrates the crucial role that Christians and Christian doctrines played in the social creation of race. In the context of early modern Europe, Christian identity was assumed, and was interwoven with the development of national identities and the entitlement of nations to explore and colonize.

This view that God's providence determined the ordering of races and anointed monarchs to explore and dominate took on its own particular form in early modern England. Michael Craton identifies the beginning of the English slave trade, which would

¹² Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 42–44.

¹³ Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 17.

grow to transport 3.1 million Africans to English colonies, with the first slaving trip of John Hawkins in 1562.¹⁴ The Church of England was complicit in the North Atlantic slave trade, and greatly profited from the trade, labor, and output of church owned plantations in the Caribbean and the colonies, and expanded its own reach through the supply of clergy, parishes, and missions in the colonies. The state church, with the monarch as its head, functioned politically as an agency of the government, occasionally its conscience, as well as the divine endorser of the nation's expansion and the formation of empire. The present-day Anglican Communion offers a map of British rule from the 16th century to today. It is a genealogy of a theological and worshipping tradition, but also a genealogy of colonial oppression and struggle.

The English slave trade and early colonization were not without critics and resistance. James Walvin outlines the Christian activism, largely from the Quaker and early Puritan traditions that spurred public Christian conscience to disavow the trade and slavery itself. He notes that Anglicans, with only a few exceptions, were reactive rather than proactive in this change in social thought about the slave trade and slavery. Anglican popular opinion following the government's lukewarm interest in an abolitionist agenda until the force of public opinion led to the 1807 legal outlaw, then full emancipation in 1833.¹⁵

¹⁴ Michael Craton, *Sinews of Empire: A Short History of British Slavery*, (Norwell: Anchor Books, 1974) 1, and "British Transatlantic Slave Trade Records," <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/british-transatlantic-slave-trade-records/> (Accessed 17 October 2018).

¹⁵ James Walvin, "Slavery, the Slave Trade, and the Churches," *Quaker Studies* 12, no. 2 (2008) 190.

While the separation of the North American colonies and the establishment of the Episcopal Church and its own polity did see a break from the resources and community of the Church of England, the first generation of Episcopalians sought as much continuity with their former church as possible. The framework of the Elizabethan settlement was adapted for the culture and processes of a democratic republic, and the first bishop retained the Church of England's apostolic succession, albeit through his consecration in the Church of Scotland.¹⁶ As historian Harold Lewis puts it,

The Episcopal Church is a 'non-prophet organization,' that is to say, a body that has not, historically, set a moral example for the nation to follow but rather has taken its lead from the mores of the nation with which it has had a unique, symbiotic relationship since they both came into existence, almost simultaneously, at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁷

The Episcopal Church was operating under the United States' ethos of the separation of church and state, and in the culture of pre-revolutionary anxiety about the infiltration and influence of bishop, these adaptations of polity demonstrated an eagerness to integrate to the political and cultural norms as a church of the United States, connected to power in a new way for a new world.¹⁸

The Church, the Civil War, and Reconstruction

The biggest reckoning with slavery, religion, and institutional power came a generation and a half later in the American Civil War. During the Civil War, seven

¹⁶ Ecclesiology Committee of the House of Bishops, "A Primer on the Government of The Episcopal Church and its Underlying Theology," *Sewanee Theological Review* 61, no. 2 (Fall 2013) 352.

¹⁷ Harold T. Lewis, "Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 67, No. 4, (December 1998) 467.

¹⁸ Jon Butler, Randall Herbert Balmer, and Grant Wacker, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) 134.

dioceses in Confederate States seceded, along with their civil communities, from The Episcopal Church as the institution based in the Union. These Dioceses formed the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America, following the tradition's heritage of associating itself with a national government identity, as well as mirroring the general divide in the country and the south around slavery economics and state level rights to self-government. The ecclesial split held the focus of the denomination after the end of the war, surpassing other social concerns facing broken communities, even the challenges facing African Americans freed from slavery. As Gardner H. Shattuck writes, "Abhorring ecclesiastical schism more than the suffering of people held in bondage, white Episcopalians had argued that slavery was a purely political question and, as such, beyond the church's concern."¹⁹ The denomination set aside questions of slavery, liberation and equality, dismissing them from the purview of the Church, and tended instead to its internal concerns. By recognizing the episcopate of Richard Hooker Wilmer, who had been consecrated during the war by Confederate bishops, the Episcopal Church demonstrated a warm welcome back to southern clergy and churches, reunifying the denomination by 1866.²⁰

The Episcopal Church's concern for freed slaves was relegated to educational endeavors and mission congregations through the Freedman's Commission, which was primarily supported by geographically and culturally far-removed Episcopal leadership from the north. Black parishes were racially segregated, but early efforts to explore the

¹⁹ Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr. *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000) 9.

²⁰ Felder Dorn, "Challenges Faced by Sewanee's Owing Dioceses at the End of the Civil War," *Sewanee Theological Review* 58, No. 2 (Easter 2015) 328.

consecration of a black suffragan bishop for the supervision of black parishes were dismissed. This might be seen as a lack of concern of ecclesial unity, and so black parishes and clergy were not represented equally in the authority and councils of the church. For a denomination in which representation through episcopal governance expresses key theological values, the economic paternalism of white Episcopal parishes and bishops toward black parishes was reinscribed through theological and ecclesial paternalism, separate and vastly unequal.²¹

The Church and Jim Crow

This dynamic characterized the Episcopal Church in the Jim Crow era. Halting progress toward economic and representational equality received resistance from southern dioceses. The long legacy of segregationist practices in Episcopal institutions, from parishes to seminaries, prevented or encumbered the ordinations of black clergy, and the denomination struggled with equality of orders. Dynamic and committed Episcopal leaders such as Alexander Crummel, a priest, educator, and philosopher, persisted in calls to ordination, serving the church and unapologetically advocating for racial justice in spite of institutional roadblocks.²² Equality in ordination, particularly ordination of black priests as bishops and equal opportunities for denominational leadership and ministry among black clergy, was another arena of ambivalent change and halting progress. The precedent for equal ordination to priesthood was established in the

²¹ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 10, 14.

²² “The Rev. Alexander Crummel, 1819–1898,” *The Church Awakens: African Americans and the Struggle for Justice*, <https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/exhibits/show/leadership/clergy/crummell> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

ordination of abolitionist Absalom Jones. Jones, a man born in slavery who purchased his own freedom, petitioned congress for the end of slavery, founded the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in Philadelphia in response to segregation in worship at a Methodist Episcopal Church, and became the first black Episcopal priest in 1804.²³ Some segregationist clergy actually argued on behalf of black bishops in an effort to maintain complete separation of the races, while black leadership advocated this equality in order to affirm the sacred authority of all clergy regardless of race, that priests should all rightfully take their role and place in the councils of the church.²⁴ The 1874 General Convention's establishment of the suffragan bishop attempted to accommodate concerns for equality of ordination. While this role was embraced by white Episcopalians in need of episcopal support, black suffragan bishops solved the problem of ordination equality and allowed black ministers to serve in (often race-specific) missional roles without pushing to fully embrace a policy to affirm black bishops diocesan.²⁵

Later, the slow pace of institutional change would be seen in the case of the 1952 integration controversies at the University of the South at Sewanee, in which nine theology faculty resigned in protest to the administration's refusal to integrate the school

²³ "The Reverend Absalom Jones," *The African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas*, <http://www.aecst.org/ajones.htm> (Accessed 3 June 2019) and Herbert Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire: The Politics of Exodus in African American Biblical Interpretation*, (New York: NYU Press, 2015) 16–19.

²⁴ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 16–17.

²⁵ Harold T. Lewis, "A History of Bishops Suffragan: In the American Episcopal Church," *The Role of Bishops Suffragan in the Episcopal Church*, Council for the Development of Ministry, https://www.episcopalarchives.org/sites/default/files/episcopacy/1996_CoDevMinistry_RoleofBishopsSuffragan.pdf, (Accessed 5 July 2019) 13–14.

and financial backers of the university issued “whites only” ultimatums for their funding. While other seminaries had this struggle to move forward, the School of Theology at Sewanee was the last to integrate. After the Sewanee controversies, it would be another 13 years until the Rev. Joseph Nathaniel Green and the Rev. William Fletcher O’Neal would be the first black graduates from the seminary at the University of the South.²⁶ Commitment to the status quo and reticence to take a public stand on a politicized issue left the southern Episcopal Church in turmoil, resisting change, prosing greater measures of segregation of parishes, seminarians, and conventions.²⁷ Meanwhile, dioceses and seminaries in other parts of the country, as well as the national denominational structure, moved slowly but steadily toward a slightly more welcoming stance in the parish, church leadership, seminary enrollments, and economic support.²⁸ However, most efforts within the denomination were far from radical. As John L. Kater writes, “As long as a relative calm blanketed black-white relationship in the United States, the Church acquiesced in and tacitly approved a de facto segregated church in a segregated society.”²⁹

²⁶ Hannah Pommersheim, “Filling in the Spaces: A Reconsideration of the Turbulent Desegregation of Sewanee’s School of Theology, 1952–1953,” <http://meridiana.sewanee.edu/> (Accessed 6 May 2019).

²⁷ John L. Kater, Jr., “Experiment In Freedom: The Episcopal Church And the Black Power Movement,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 48, No. 1 (March 1979) 68.

²⁸ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 42-44.

²⁹ Lewis, “Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973,” 468.

The assumed neutrality of segregation and the narratives of progress in race relations masked the range of everyday oppressions and terror facing black Americans during this period of history. The Jim Crow era, named for a pejorative minstrel character, followed the post-Civil War Reconstruction Era. As states resumed a greater degree of subsidiarity, white supremacist backlash began to strip reconstruction protections and powers. Criminalization of black poverty, under- and unemployment through new vagrancy laws led to the widespread of convict labor and labor leasing, particularly of black men in an echo of slavery.³⁰ The ever-present specter of undeserved and unpunished violence, present during slavery, lingered on and took particularly horrific shape in the form of lynching. These extra-judicial murders were construed as a tool for white community security against the threat of peoples of color, but during the Jim Crow era they became more particularly racialized as the term came to mean almost exclusively the extra-legal torture and killing of African Americans. Theologian James Cone, in his Christological reflections on lynching, described these events as “the white community’s way of forcibly reminding blacks of their inferiority and powerlessness. To be black meant that whites could do anything to you and your people, and that neither you nor anyone else could do anything about it.”³¹ They are historically associated with, but not limited to, the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, which formed in Pulaski, Tennessee

³⁰ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (New York: The New Press, 2012) 31.

³¹ James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2011) 7.

in 1865 as a white supremacist organization, with particular resurgences at the turn of the century and again during the 1960's Civil Rights Movement.³²

Lynching was a form of domestic terrorism that shaped (and continues to shape) the black social imagination and daily life. Lynchings occurred across the country, particularly in the Southeast, in response to minor social transgressions (the inappropriateness determined, of course, by the dominant culture of white supremacy), false and untried criminal charges, and explosions of white violent resentment against black communities that flourished or advocated for better access to social and economic resources.³³ Lynchings were commonly carried out as a reaction to or prevention of the notion that black men were sexual predators bent on miscegenation and the violation of pure white womanhood. This racist narrative of hypersexuality persists today and has always worked to obscure the true and original story of white patriarchal violence against people of color.³⁴ These events also carried weight as a social identity formation for the whites who led, participated in, and beheld them. In particular, public lynching, most

³² The Equal Justice Initiative, "Lynching in America," <https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/> (Accessed 27 December 2018).

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Amy Louise Wood, "The Spectacle of Lynching: Rituals of White Supremacy in the Jim Crow Era," *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 77, No. 3-4 (May-September, 2018), 765 and Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (Union City: Tembo Publishing, 2014) Kindle Edition, 6. Wells notes, "Nobody in this section of the country believes the old thread-bare lie that Negro men rape white women." The mythology was an unjust fabrication, often complete fiction, and occasionally (as reported by Wells, pg. 6-17) the false interpretation of consensual romantic encounters. The theme of rape was not fully believed even by the white community, but still used as the defense of lynchings.

ubiquitous at the turn of the century, served as an experience and signifier of a social group boundary and identity marker. As public spectacles, the ritual invited a participatory audience.³⁵ Everyday community members took part in lynchings both as agents of torture and as participant-observers in the spectacle. Sometimes spectators purchased postcard pictures with the victim; sometimes they took severed digits and pieces of flesh as souvenirs.³⁶ Private or clandestine lynching also occurred but was more socially condemned than the public spectacles. In the public lynching, there was a greater sense of social approval with the presence and participation of the most upstanding and respected white citizens, and little to no criminal prosecution occurred in the wake of these events. Public lynching followed a ritualistic pattern, outlined by Andrew S. Buckser, of determining the lynching victim (a purported criminal or potential criminal), disrupting the legal course of criminal trial and obtaining the victim, attempting to establish guilt independent of any judicial proceeding, moving the victim to the place of murder, and finally, lynching and spectacle.³⁷ The predictable and ritualistic form contributed to the nature of lynching as an identity marker for white community belonging, forming the in- and out-groups of society. The ritualistic nature also contributed to the way in which lynching took on a life of its own as a mechanism of terrorism among black communities, a looming possibility that curbed efforts for

³⁵ Mattias Smångs, "Doing Violence, Making Race: Southern Lynching and White Racial Group Formation," *American Journal of Sociology* 121, no. 5 (March 2016) 1334, 1337.

³⁶ "Evidence of Things Left Unsaid: The Lynching of Matthew Williams, 1931," <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/evidence-things-unsaid>, (Accessed 20 November 2018) and Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 9.

³⁷ Andrew S. Buckser, "Lynching as Ritual in the American South," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 37, *The Politics of Identity and Difference* (1992) 16-18.

liberation and equality and inhibited natural community flourishing through its ever-present threat.

The Church and Civil Rights

As the 20th century moved on, the tensions of racial violence and the advocacy for greater equality provided an impetus for change in the institution of the Episcopal Church. The late 1940's and early 50's saw the harvest of years of legal work and activism on behalf of more thorough protective measures for the rights and safety of black Americans. The groundbreaking 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. Board of Education* challenged the belief that separate could be equal, setting a new precedent and setting in motion the wheels of legal integration. The Episcopal Church's response to the decision was belated and reactionary. A debate was sparked across the denomination about how to incorporate integration into the business of General Convention, and what this case meant for parishes and their leadership. But progress was slow-going when the greater society and many dioceses within the church were resistant to change.³⁸

Despite the overall tone of resistance within the church, there were individuals and grassroots communities at work to enact and embrace changes for equality. Gardiner Shattuck Jr. highlights the story of Carl and Anne Braden, two Kentucky Episcopalians who took seriously their faith and commitment to equality. The couple helped Andrew Wade, who was black, purchase a home for his family in Louisville in 1954. The overwhelmingly violent white supremacist response led to death threats, attacks, and ultimately in the home being bombed. But rather than prosecuting the hate crime against

³⁸ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 62-63, 66.

the Wade family, the legal system convicted the Bradens of conspiracy and sedition under trumped up suspicion of communist ties. They received little support or recognition from the Episcopal Church, although their actions took place within the framework of a clearly articulated Episcopal theology of social engagement and justice.³⁹ But other efforts, some sound and others misguided, were at work in the Episcopal Church. The formation of the Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity (ESCRU) in 1958 was an early inner denominational grassroots effort to connect Episcopal incarnational social theology with the Civil Rights Movement. While this group worked to provide spiritual formation for social conscience among clergy and laity, this group was also a driving force in the closure of many black parishes and missions for the sake of integration and unity, a naïve strategy that resulted in more departures from the Episcopal Church than successfully integrated and flourishing multiracial parishes.⁴⁰

During the early Civil Rights movement, many efforts within the Church to clearly address issues of racial oppression and inequality were ambivalently engaged. Though the national church was formally committed to this work, actions to elevate the leadership of black Episcopalians or show support for black communities' desires for autonomous worshipping communities, continued education and communications around the issue were seen as a reinforcement of racism, rather than a necessary step for truth-

³⁹ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 73.

⁴⁰ Gardiner H. Shattuck, Jr., "Serving God in the World: Theology and Civil Rights Activism in the Episcopal Church, 1958—1973," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 64, No. 3, (September 1995) 334 and Harold T. Lewis, "Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973," 470.

telling and reckoning.⁴¹ The Episcopal commitment to preservation of the status quo and calls for slow progress, refrain from any sort of direct action were perhaps most famously represented in “An Appeal for Law and Order and Common Sense,” the Birmingham open letter from white clergy that prompted the famous response from the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” These white clergy included the Episcopal Bishop of Alabama and the Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Alabama. The signers were ministers who considered themselves active supports of integration and equality but would not go against the power structures of their communities. The published statement upheld law and order, diminishing the import of the Civil Rights Movement’s direct action as going against common sense.⁴² This tendency to seek peace through silence and sameness, rather than liberation, demonstrates one of bell hooks’s observations about the functions of whiteness. Reflecting on race dialogue with white college students, she wrote: “They have a deep emotional investment in the myth of ‘sameness,’ even as their actions reflect the primacy of whiteness as a sign informing who they are and how they think.”⁴³ This sameness, culturally developed in the years after the Voting Rights Act as a form of social acclamation to integration and civil rights for black Americans, continues today. But to seek sameness and meld the U.S. American identity and experience, even if well-intentioned, primarily serves white comfort and

⁴¹ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 123.

⁴² “White clergymen urge local Negroes to withdraw from demonstrations,” *The Birmingham News*, 13 April 1963, <https://bplonline.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p4017coll2/id/746/> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

⁴³ bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, (Boston: South End Press, 1992) 167.

creates a social discourse of false respectability, in which naming the problems of racial injustice itself becomes the inappropriate racial practice. Equality demands truth telling and the hard, long work of black liberation, but sameness is a weak counterfeit that assuages guilt but leaves systems unchanged.

Law and Order in the “Post-Racial” Era

In the decades following the apex of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s and the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act, conservatism seeking to maintain social order responded to the larger social move toward color-blindness under official policies of equality. Michelle Alexander notes that moving toward the framework of “law and order” was a racially loaded yet more socially condoned alternative to “segregation forever.”⁴⁴ Mainstream white supremacist views and segregation had become fringe by the 70s, so continued efforts toward equality, address of systemic inequality and the disproportionate impact of poverty on the black community were construed as overreacting or extreme.⁴⁵ The perceived increased threat of violent resistance from black communities in the late 60’s and 70’s led many Episcopalians to reject outright Black Power. White would-be allies, uncomfortable with strategic shifts in the work for civil rights, portrayed black-led movements for community empowerment and self-determination as equivalent to white radical racism like the KKK. Episcopal groups, not unique among other conflicted white liberal organizations, refused direct financial

⁴⁴ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 40.

⁴⁵ Paul Harvey, “Race, Religion, and Right in the South, 1945–1990,” in *Politics and Religion in the White South*, ed. Glenn Feldman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005) 117.

support of any organizations or efforts suspect of any tendency toward an ideology of black power.⁴⁶ The maintenance of white power structures muddled efforts for racial equality in denominational leadership moving forward from the advances of the Civil Rights movement.

For example, through the 60's and early 70's, the Episcopal Church's Joint Urban Program, was headed by white priests. Its rhetoric and programming fed into a narrative of black urban and white suburban divide, and as Shattuck writes, "tended to view African Americans more as beneficiaries of the denomination's largesse than as actors in their own right."⁴⁷ However, black-led efforts for structural change brought about progress in the church. In 1969, James Forman, affiliated with the Black Economic Development Conference, issued the "Black Manifesto," calling for Christian and Jewish institutions to offer reparations for slavery. Forman dramatically presented the manifesto at Riverside Church in Manhattan, but the call included protests and confrontations across mainline and Jewish congregations.⁴⁸ The Episcopal Church's response was not a direct offering of reparations through BEDC, but a bolstering of support to the recently developed General Convention Special Program, a redirecting of denominational financial resources to alleviate social ills. The 1967 convention proposal grew in part

⁴⁶ John L. Kater, "Experiment in Freedom," 72.

⁴⁷ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 170.

⁴⁸ Wyatt Massey, "'We are therefore demanding...' Reparations in the Christian church," *Frederick News-Post*, 29 March 2019 (Accessed 5 July 2019) https://www.fredericknewspost.com/news/lifestyle/religion/we-are-therefore-demanding-reparations-in-the-christian-church/article_c396439b-5929-5685-ac5a-40f31c12353e.html.

from the work of the Union of Black Episcopalians (previously the Union of Black Clergy and Laity) in theologically and practically resisting the evils of segregation, and elevating race-based economic and power discrepancy as an ethical concern of the church.⁴⁹ While denominational resolutions in response to the “Black Manifesto” were not approved, it spurred on discourse around and support for the work of the GCSP and its social ministry.⁵⁰

Public narratives criminalizing black poverty accelerated in the late 20th century. The Moynihan Report (officially titled “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action”), published in 1965, was a complex attempt to assess the political, economic, and social/familial dynamics of black life in America, but it became a chief tool for conservative white political rhetoric and policy-making. This report was widely and diversely interpreted. For white supremacist capitalist political and social agendas, it offered the scaffolding of stereotyping and racial profiling that fueled the racially loaded wars on poverty and drugs of the respective Johnson and Nixon presidential administrations. The constructed caricatures of welfare queens and scammers pathologized black poverty. Along with assumed stereotypes of drug use and street violence, blackness in the white-dominated, contemporary social imagination was

⁴⁹ J. Carlton Hayden, “Who We Are: History,” *The Union of Black Episcopalians*, <https://www.ube.org/Who%20We%20Are/ube-history.html> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

⁵⁰ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, 210 and “Research Report: The Question of Reparations to the African American Community and the General Convention Special Program,” The Archives of the Episcopal Church, 31 March 2005, <https://episcopalarchives.org/church-awakens/files/original/cd22e4aa5fe88da9dcbf51671aa30b4e.pdf> (Accessed 5 July 2019).

construed as innately problematic, a social ill to be controlled or cured. Suggested solutions failed to consider systemic racism as a cause for suffering or as a perpetuating force in both the realities and the overblown perceptions of crime and the “culture of poverty.”⁵¹ The Moral Majority movement fueled this iteration of systemic racism and social policies that harmed rather than healed communities of color. This cultural and political force, particularly in the circles of Southern Evangelicalism, inherited many of the cultural biases of the previous generation. This generation’s “well-honed theological defenses of hierarchy, submission and order” often provided a subtly white supremacist over-simplifying moralistic analysis to complex and historically contingent social issues.⁵²

In the last several years, since the murder of Trayvon Martin and the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, social concerns of white supremacy and anti-black racism have focused on community policing and the preemptive criminalization and presumption of guilt of people of color in their day-to-day lives. Sensationalist reporting and theorizing during the crack epidemic of the 80’s and 90’s, blatantly singling out drug use in poor communities of color, gave contemporary language of crime to existing bias and criminalization against people of color, setting the stage for violent and reactionary over-policing. Political scientist John DiIulio, Jr.’s language of the black “super-predator,” an unsupported hypothesis about increased crack cocaine use in black communities and its supposed impact on the next generation of black American children,

⁵¹ Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy*, (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015) 3–4 and Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 45.

⁵² Harvey, “Race, Religion, and Right in the South,” 121.

was used as factual information. The association of black communities with crack cocaine was disproportionate to social realities of drug use and race statistics of drug use. The popular narrative resulted in an increase in policing of black communities, and the enactment of inequitable mandatory minimum sentencing for crack cocaine drug convictions. When DiIulio's prediction was not borne out by reality, the rhetoric had already taken shape, offering a pseudo-scientific rationalization of fear of the black community that resulted in far more harm done to black communities than to the whites who feared them.⁵³

All of this has taken place within the context of a contemporary racial ideology that sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has labeled “color-blind racism.”

He contends that the main frames of this ideology are the denial of the centrality of discrimination ("Discrimination ended in the sixties!"), the abstract extension of liberal principles to racial matters ("I am all for equal opportunity; that's why I oppose affirmative action"), the naturalization of racial matters ("Residential segregation is natural..."), and the cultural explanation of minorities' standing ("Mexicans are poorer because they lack the motivation to succeed").⁵⁴

This attitude naturalizes systems of racial oppression and provides an absolution of responsibility in the liberal religious conscience. Unquestioned, this ideology permits and even encourages unequal policing and obscures intentional economic planning and civic policy choices that disadvantage communities of color. But the rise of the Black Lives

⁵³ Gayle Fisher-Stewart, “To Serve and Protect: The Police, Race, and the Episcopal Church in the Black Lives Matter Era,” *Anglican Theological Review* 99, no. 3 (Summer 2017): 453–454.

⁵⁴ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Amanda Lewis, and David G. Embrick, “I Did Not Get That Job Because of a Black Man...”: The Story Lines and Testimonies of Color-Blind Racism,” *Sociological Forum* 19, no. 4 (2004): 560.

Matter movement, “an ideological and political intervention in a world where Black lives are systematically and intentionally targeted for demise,” refuses to have racialized policing and death-dealing bias silenced in white dominated public discourse any longer.⁵⁵

Combined with the rise of the alt-right white supremacist movement in the Trump era, moderate and progressive white Christians are being called to a reckoning. The broad emergence of neo-Nazi and white nationalist movements and grassroots organizing, termed more palatably the “alt-right,” came more clearly into the public eye during the 2016 Donald Trump presidential campaign, as then-candidate Trump used countless veiled (and not-so-veiled) racist references and code in campaign promises, termed dog-whistle politics. This movement had a horrifying historic moment in Charlottesville, VA August 2017, when about 100 people with tiki torches protested the removal of a Confederate statue on the University of Virginia Campus, chanting racial slurs and giving the Nazi salute. The event culminated in the murder of a counter-protestor, Heather Heyer, by a known white supremacist.⁵⁶ The highly public and shameless movement is becoming normalized as a social perspective or legitimate political position in some communities. While the Episcopal Church’s formal acknowledgment of a legacy of white supremacy and 2015 commitment to the work of racial justice preceded this rise of white nationalist sentiment, the church is called to a more urgent response to this situation

⁵⁵ Alicia Garza, one of the originators of the #blacklivesmatter tag and movement, quoted in Fisher-Stewart, “To Serve and Protect,” 457.

⁵⁶ Stephanie L. Hartzell, “Alt-White: Conceptualizing the “Alt-Right” as a Rhetorical Bridge between White Nationalism and Mainstream Public Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* 8, no.1 (2018): 7-10.

through ongoing work of community and political activism, education and preaching,
addressing social and systemic racism and its symptoms.

Race Theory and Black Theology

White Supremacist Capitalist Patriarchy

The cultural critic bell hooks is known for her intersectional term “imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy” to describe the intersecting powers and oppressions that dictate our social systems. This combined term implies a deep connectedness of the oppressions of empire, whiteness, capitalist economic systems, and the subjugation of women.⁵⁷ These categories, unlike the terms “racism” or “sexism” or “classism,” refer to entrenched systems, rather than personal prejudice, hatreds, or actions. The efforts of individual persons to resist participation in these forms of bigotry is legitimate and worthwhile, and present-day whites are factually correct in resisting blame for the evils of slavery. However, as James Cone writes,

If you benefit from the past and present injustices committed against Blacks, you are partly and indirectly accountable as an American citizen and as a member of the institutions that perpetuate racism... We must accept the responsibility to do everything we can to correct America's past and present wrongs.⁵⁸

Even those white individuals most committed to the work of their own hates and biases must also do the work of contending with institutionalized hate and bias, where power is consolidated into a whole society of oppression to the benefit of whites. It is important to note that the term “white supremacy” has become culturally tied to images of the Ku Klux Klan, lynching, neo-Nazis, and other gross displays of racialized violence. Each of

⁵⁷ bell hooks and George Yancy, “bell hooks: Buddhism, The Beats, and Loving Blackness,” 10 December 2015, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/12/10/bell-hooks-buddhism-the-beats-and-loving-blackness/#more-158658 (Accessed 28 December 2018).

⁵⁸ James H. Cone, “Theology’s Greatest Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy,” *Black Theology: An International Journal* 2, no. 2 (2004) 146.

these examples does find its roots in the belief that whiteness is superior. But this sense of superiority, which Kelly Brown Douglas terms “Anglo-saxon exceptionalism,” is also the source of every form of racial inequality in society, every microaggression, and the systemic disenfranchisement of people of color in our society.⁵⁹ To use the term “white supremacy” points toward the most obvious forms of bigotry, but also acknowledges the shared assumptions of all manner of inequality and oppression, even the most subtle or morally self-justifying.

“White supremacist capitalist patriarchy” is also a more helpful and broad category, as it accommodates the potential and real participation in oppression by people of color, women, and the poor. Christians might think of this as what the author of Ephesians called “the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil.” White supremacy is a massive cultural and political force with a toxic spiritual dimension and the power to infiltrate and subsume the thoughts and values of its subjects.⁶⁰ Or as writer James Baldwin put it, “The oppressed and the oppressor are bound together within the same society; they accept the same criteria, they share the same beliefs, they both alike depend on the same reality.”⁶¹ Its ideology of control, suppression, profit at the expense of others, and cultivation of unnamed power dynamics are contagious beyond those who are raced

⁵⁹ Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015) 10.

⁶⁰ Ephesians 6:12, New Revised Standard Version.

⁶¹ James Baldwin, *Collected Essays*, “Notes of a Native Son,” (New York: Library Classics of the United States, 1998) 17.

white. Whiteness takes on the form of powers and principalities, a political system to which its subjects become oriented regardless of race.⁶² It is important to note that there are other social and economic dynamics that lead to some whites being marginalized; as Alfred J. Lopez so succinctly puts it, “hegemonic whiteness through colonialism has not necessarily meant that all whites enjoyed the same privileges by simple virtue of race identification.”⁶³ But this hegemonic whiteness is the preeminent oppressive ideology, and remains the most pervasive force of oppression and dominance in the United States and its institutions. A systemic and nuanced view of white supremacy is an important lens for considering the work of Christianity to contend with its own harmful legacies, and in its work to claim its message of liberation in Jesus Christ.

The Episcopal Church is wedded to and complicit in United States empire and white supremacy partly because, as Harold Lewis notes, of its “unique, symbiotic relationship since they both came into existence, almost simultaneously, at the end of the eighteenth century.”⁶⁴ The historical connections between the denomination and the social and political powers of whiteness have been well established. But while this

⁶² bell hooks, “Cultural Criticism and Transformation,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zQUuHFKP-9s>. Sut Jhally, Producer and Director. (1997). “To me an important break through, I felt, in my work and that of others was the call to use the term white supremacy, over racism because racism in and of itself did not really allow for a discourse of colonization and decolonization, the recognition of the internalized racism within people of color and it was always in a sense keeping things at the level at which whiteness and white people remained at the center of the discussion. In my classroom I might say to students that you know that when we use the term white supremacy it doesn't just evoke white people, it evokes a political world that we can all frame ourselves in relationship to.”

⁶³ Alfred J. Lopez, “Whiteness After Empire,” 18.

⁶⁴ Harold T. Lewis, “Racial Concerns in the Episcopal Church Since 1973,” 467.

project addresses whiteness and white supremacy within the institution, it must be noted that today there is limited diversity within the Episcopal Church. 10% of our denomination is non-white.⁶⁵ We have many parishes, lay persons and clergy of color, despite historical attempts by the white dominated institution to close black parishes, despite the historically-grounded, racialized socioeconomic roadblocks to so many who might be called to holy orders, despite a culture of white supremacist affluence that alienates those who do not fit the upper class or upwardly mobile anglophone mold. When I speak of whiteness and white supremacy in the Episcopal Church, then, it is not with an idea that the church is truly composed solely of individuals raced white, but that the history and leadership of the denomination has been dominated by white persons and by the economic and social principles central to whiteness. As explored in the previous chapter, the Episcopal Church in the United States has participated and benefitted from white supremacy in its economics, its social and political power, and its cultural capital. In order to do the gospel work of justice, in order for us to understand the deepest ethical call of the Eucharist as our principal act of worship, this tradition must give careful attention to its racial history and to the theological work and reflections of people of color.

The connection between white supremacy and capitalism is crucial in understanding both the historical context of the formation of racial categories and present-day economic inequality across race. It is also a crucial reminder for affluent American Christians, particularly white members of one of the most affluent Christian

⁶⁵ “Religious Landscape Study: Members of the Episcopal Church,” *Pew Research Center*, <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-denomination/episcopal-church/> (Accessed 17 October 2018).

denominations, that capitalist economics is not a morally neutral category. Dwight N. Hopkins describes the theological and economic development of race as a defiance of God's telos for human beings.

Whites with power redefined black as evil. Hoarding communal resources as monopolized private property, powerful white families defied divine creation and its telos and crafted one of the most sinister racial asymmetries in human history.⁶⁶

The characteristics of white capitalism are fear of scarcity, pride and entitlement, betrayal, and self-interestedness and desire for control, to the point of exploiting other persons and the earth. The particular manifestation of whiteness in the transatlantic slave trade demonstrates the fullness of this evil, as the affluence of white western countries was founded in an economy of enslaved black persons. Anti-black racism and all forms of white supremacy are the construct justifying an economy of slavery, oppression, and withholding. It divides human embodiment from the grace of God's holy image for the purpose of human gain. In short, "it is idolatry," an idolatry of wealth, safety, and dominance.⁶⁷

The redefinition of black as evil extends beyond the justification of slavery, again, as noted in the previous chapter. Kelly Brown Douglas offers insight on the ideological implications of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism on people of color. People of color are reduced to their bodiliness by the rhetoric and work of white supremacy, and black people, in particular, receive this treatment. Under slavery and convict leasing, the black body was commodified as property and labor. The black body was, and continues to be,

⁶⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, "Theological Basis of Ecclesial Anti-Racist Witness," *Anglican Theological Review* 90, no. 1 (2007) 14.

⁶⁷ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 109.

hyper-sexualized, which justifies white control, rationalized the sexual abuses of black slaves, and condones vindictive violence against people of color intimately partnered with whites. Finally, black bodies are dangerous, criminal, and guilty. They are dangerous to the myth of white exceptionalism on the basis of difference, and they are socially construed as a physical danger. This myth of the threatening person of color, combined with criminalization and presupposition of guilt, justified (and continues to justify) anti-black violence at both the personal and social levels. It has served as the ideological justification for the activity of the Klan, lynching, disproportionate police violence against people of color, the modern prison industrial complex, the sexualization of little black girls and youths, and the treatment of little black boys and youths as dangerous adult men.⁶⁸

Theology of Black Liberation

James H. Cone's Black Liberation Theology offers a counter perspective to the logic of white supremacy and the Christianity that sustained it. The African American biblical encounter and theological reflection has been profoundly shaped by the experience of generations of chattel slavery, and the restrictions and reinterpretations of Christianity during that time, continuing on through generations of adaptive systemic racism. The encounter and reflection have also been profoundly shaped by resilience and joy in the face of suffering and adversity.⁶⁹ The African American hermeneutic tradition

⁶⁸ Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground*, 54, 65–66, 69, 77, 87.

⁶⁹ James H. Cone, "Biblical Revelation and Social Existence," *Black Theology: A Documentary History, Vol. 1 (1966–1971)* ed. James H. Cone and Gayraud S. Wilmore, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993) 173.

finds a deep connection with the story of the people of Israel and their exodus, and with the crucifixion and vindication of Jesus. Cone writes,

[Jesus] was crucified by the same principalities and powers that lynched black people in America. Because God was present with Jesus on the cross and thereby refused to let Satan and death have the last word about his meaning, God was also present at every lynching in the United States.⁷⁰

For Cone, the presence of God in suffering is unquestioned. Unjust suffering that is theologically excused as punishment or purposeless sets up a cheap theodicy. The more radical and truer claim is then made when humans suffer as Christ suffered, God is very near them. Cone continues,

God transformed lynched black bodies into the recrucified body of Christ. *Every time a white mob lynched a black person, they lynched Jesus.* The lynching tree is the cross in America. When American Christians realize that they can meet Jesus only in the crucified bodies in our midst, they will encounter the real scandal of the cross.⁷¹

Not only is God in solidarity with the suffering but transforms the suffering black body into the recrucified body of Christ, then also the resurrected and glorified Christ. It is in this concrete experience of suffering that Jesus Christ is understood, as Cone argues, not only for black Americans that identify with the suffering and legitimate fear of suffering. But it is also the place of encountering Jesus for white Americans, whose security and status profited from black suffering, and whose social and emotional comfort is shielded from black suffering through a society structured for the benefit of whiteness and the marginalization of other voices and needs. Liberation from oppression and from

⁷⁰ Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 158.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

oppressing is found in the resurrection of Jesus, the refusal of God to be defined by or ended in suffering and death.

James Cone's work values particularity and the vital importance of social and bodily existence for Christian theology, especially Christology. His commitment that "all theological language must be concrete language" is a commitment to the particularity of the incarnation. The particularity of God's experience as Jesus of Nazareth becomes a universal symbolic significance, but this particularity is not antithetical to paradox or ambiguity. All the mystery of God Incarnate is located in the concrete person and social location of Jesus, and all theological reflection on God and God's son is bound to concrete persons, their perspectives, their social locations. He observes that "the bane of white thought, of white theology, and of the white church is its commitment to abstraction."⁷² Whiteness removes white people from their own concrete stories. It is a mark of whiteness to assert that there is one objective and true theology, untainted by subjective experience. But as Cone writes, "although the revelation of God may be universal and eternal, theological talk about that revelation is filtered through human experience, which is limited by social realities."⁷³ All thought, writing, discourse, and worship of God happen within human experience and limitation. If the filter of our human experience is denied, all the ambiguity and vulnerability of embodied and particular existence shrouded, all that remains is the false certainty of abstraction. Love of abstraction in theology, history, and ethics, is a commitment to concepts rather than the concrete. It too easily permits the justification of oppression, of varying social and

⁷² J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account*, 162.

⁷³ James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997) 39.

subjective realities from suffering, and can obscure complicity and benefit from systems of harm by marking privileged and oppressing social locations as morally neutral, unquestioned and objective realities.

Cornel West, reflecting on James Cone's theology, notes that this black liberation theology begins with death, the experience of and acknowledgment of death. Reflecting on Cone, and a quote from Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, West writes,

White supremacy must die in order for America to truly live... We could add that male supremacy must die, anti-Arab racism must die, anti-Semitism must die, vast economic inequality must die, homophobia must die, ecological abuse must die. But, again, it is a process, not an event. It dies in part when we look deep, deep down within our hearts and souls and minds and recognize that the white supremacy, male supremacy, and homophobia are in me the individual as well as in our institutions.⁷⁴

While West is by no means advocating an abdication of social engagement in activism, policy and politics, his words here point to the interwoven spiritual and material natures of white supremacy. The attitude of subjugation and superiority extends to minorities, women, the LGBTQ+ community, the poor, and even the earth itself. White supremacist oppression seeks death of people, of otherness, of any supposed threat to its power and self-justification. Liberation, expressed by West as necessitating death, seeks the death of systems and structures of oppression to make way for resurrection and restoration for those who are suffering. Blackness, for Cone and West, while descriptive of those raced black, is also encompassing of a theological posture. It is a unification with the oppressed and, for Christians, with Jesus Christ, who was oppressed. According to West, it is in this unification that persons and communities find grace and strength. For black liberation

⁷⁴ Cornel West, "Black Theology and Human Identity," in *Black Faith and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's Black Theology and Black Power*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2007) 16.

theology, it is in this solidarity with the oppressed that Christians find “that Jesus of Nazareth has something to do with that courage to be and the courage to love and the courage to fight for justice” in his life, ministry, death, and resurrection.⁷⁵

White Theology and Response

The illusion of objectivity is a chief sin and deception in the paradigm of whiteness and white supremacy. Just as the raced other was a social construction of the colonial period, the unraced (as in, unnamed) power status of whiteness originated there, as well. White people and white power became the authors of others’ stories, the possessors of their bodies and lives, the authority of culture, religion, and the structures of society. “Whiteness thus represents not only the contents of the colonial unconscious, but the very agent of its own repression: it is that which would simultaneously recast everything else in its own image and banish the scene of the recasting into an originary myth.”⁷⁶ White supremacy, that fundamental belief that white is right and better, is such a pernicious and dangerous ideology because it is so successful at masking itself. Its insidiousness lies in its ability to become naturalized and unassailable as the default construction of what ought to be. Whites have historically held the power to determine law and order, social structures and policies, orthodox religion and values, legitimate expressions of culture and arts, and constructions of gender and family. These are only a few of the horizons of meaning dominated by white supremacy, then made unquestioned through the mechanisms of rhetoric, power, and social control available to whiteness in

⁷⁵ West, “Black Theology and Human Identity,” 19.

⁷⁶ Alfred J. Lopez, “Whiteness After Empire,” in *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, ed. Alfred J. Lopez (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005) 5.

this society. It is the power to go unnoticed, to go unnamed in cultural preferences, signaling something wrong and inadequate in alternative forms of society, culture, family, policy, belief, and expression.⁷⁷

When whites of faith and goodwill become aware of this privileged position of ideological power and its innumerable practical manifestations, when the more complex narratives of our racially oppressive history are told, a meaningful call to action can follow. But as religious scholar Jennifer Harvey cautions, the vision for improvement and making things right can often take the shape of an over-simplistic view of reconciliation that can re-center white comfort or resist deeper transformation. In fact, she proposes a full rejection of that category and calls instead for an informed theological understanding of reparations as the right course of action for whites seeking justice.⁷⁸ The desire of the white ally to fix, help, change, or reject their own systemic power and privilege often signifies an anxiety to regain control of power over one's social location and position. It becomes an attempt at self-justification and the stabilization and reentering of white identity.⁷⁹ James Cone put it simply: "I find that the white-skinned person is worried too much about [their] own "salvation," rather than about the liberation of the black community."⁸⁰ The anxiety to help, fix, and re-center is a rejection of the fundamental

⁷⁷ Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014) 134.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁷⁹ Timothy McGee, "Against (White) Redemption: James Cone and the Christological Disruption of Racial Discourse and White Solidarity." *Political Theology* 18, no. 7 (November 2017) 547.

⁸⁰ Cone and Hordern, "Dialogue on Black Theology," 1080, quoted in Timothy McGee,

ambiguity of black life. For Cone, it is also a rejection of true, concrete Christian theology, which demands the ambiguity of the Incarnation, the tension between literal and symbolic truths, and the almighty, creator God's life as, and solidarity with, the oppressed.

The spiritual task for white Christians engaging with black liberation theology, critical race theory, and the troubling history of whiteness, is the profoundly difficult, inner work of resisting defensiveness, self-justification, and the impulse to control discourse. It is denying the drive of whiteness to maintain power in social situations and structures and re-writing the stories of past and present racial oppression to suit our own comfort. Whites who seek to understand that their own racialized identity matters, not only for white individuals and communities, but also for the continuously oppressive and biased systems that serve them, must earnestly and continually engage this lifelong process as part of the work of our discipleship and sanctification.⁸¹ But even the humility of this inner work is susceptible to (and must not fall into!) the trap of individual works-righteousness, something to be accomplished through control. Rather, these practices are built up in the context of communities, where non-colonial interdependence can be fostered, and generative love beyond the interests of persons or institutions pursued with

“Against (White) Redemption: James Cone and the Christological Disruption of Racial Discourse and White Solidarity.” *Political Theology* 18, no. 7 (November 2017) 543.

⁸¹ These dynamics of spiritual liberation work for whites are based on the insights of white social structuring and unawareness presented in “When Whites Flock Together: The Social Psychology of White Habitus,” by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carla Goar, and David Embrick, *Critical Sociology* 32, (2006) 229-253. This article offers insight into the disjointed logic of contemporary segregation, and the concrete social and economic practices of ordinary whites employed to maintain comfort and homogeneity in their communities.

accountability. It is with this commitment to a transformed whole that we turn to the work of ritual in shaping and being shaped by social realities, and in offering invitations to alternatives beyond our present moment, and beyond our imaginations.

The Role and Work of Ritual

Understanding Ritual

While the Eucharist is, for sacramental Christians, a proclamation of belief and act of worship, it can be helpful to view the sacrament from an anthropological perspective of ritual studies. Modern studies of ritual have proven to be problematic in their over-simplification of non-western cultural practices and the external gaze of the outside observer. More recent contributions to the field have shifted toward understanding culture, and in this case, the nature of ritual, in a less defined manner. Through greater attention to the evolution of culture and practice over time, the impossibility of tightly defined objectively perfect repetition, and the impact of observation on the experience of ritual participants, it is harder to achieve clear understanding of what constitutes a ritual, its components, participants, boundaries, and impact. Ronald Grimes offers the following characteristics of ritual: “ritual is performed, embodied, stylized, repetitive, rhythmic, collective, patterned, traditional, deeply felt, condensed, symbolic, dramatic, paradigmatic, transcendent, adaptive, and conscious.”⁸² These characteristics are helpful in considering the formational component of Christian liturgy in worship, personal and community spirituality, and engagement in social ethics beyond the scope of the liturgy.

Liturgical theologian Mary Margaret Kelleher, in dialogue with Bernard Lonergan, offers a robust epistemology in community dialogue and process:

⁸² Ronald Grimes quoted in Margaret Mary Kelleher, “The Liturgical Body: Symbol and Ritual” in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000) 53.

Knowing is not just seeing but is a dynamic process of attending to experience, asking and answering questions for understanding, recognizing and fulfilling conditions necessary for judging one's understanding is correct; then objectivity will be the fruit of attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility. These are the characteristics of authentic subjectivity and the criteria for objectivity.⁸³

Our theological knowledge, and the performance and embodied, social realization of theological knowing through ritual practice, must be dialogical and dynamic in this approach. Recognition of subjectivity refutes any possibility for pure, objective study or final meaning for ritual and liturgy. There is no pure ritual, only practiced and human. There can never be a perfect replication of event and ritual, or a singular understanding of its significance. The horizons of community meaning are in constant flux, as time, different perspectives, and new circumstances shift the intentions and interpretations of socially performed practices.

It is in part because of this dynamism and ambiguity that ritual theorist Catherine Bell refused the category of "ritual," instead referring to "ritualization" as a more processual and contingent framework. For Bell, "ritual" becomes too static because in the efforts to anthropologically identify rituals, their function, scope, and meaning, description becomes overprescribed and over specific, failing to account for the nuances of particular, contextual expressions of ritual and ignoring the uncertainty of where the boundaries of ritual fall. "Ritualization" is a term which notes "a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, more quotidian, activities.... For creating a qualitative distinction between the

⁸³ Mary Margaret Kelleher, "Hermeneutics in the Study of Liturgical Performance," *Worship* 67, no. 4 (1993): 299.

‘sacred’ and the ‘profane,’ and for ascribing such distinctions to realities thought to transcend the powers of human actors.”⁸⁴ This definition encompasses the ritual, tightly understood, as well as the ritual actors, preparation, and impact, and sets up Bell’s four-fold understanding of the human features of practice within ritualization: it is situational, strategic, embedded in misrecognition of its function and effect, and reconfigures power.⁸⁵ By looking at these components of ritualization’s cultural logic, there is a greater sense of the fluidity and subjectivity of any particular ritual action or moment. This notion of ritualization, then, accommodates the fact that the Eucharist, a cornerstone of the Episcopal Church’s worship and theology, can be practiced and experienced as both maintaining the comfort and privilege of whiteness, *and* practiced and experienced as a challenge to power structures and a turn toward the elevation of those who suffer unjustly. More hopefully, however, Bell’s paradigm of ritualization is an important tool for articulating the connection between liturgics and politics in sacramental religious practice.

Spiritual and Political Alternative in Ritual Action

The Eucharist is a profoundly political rite, both in its ritual function and its theological import for Christians, and particularly in the interplay of the two. Margaret Mary Kelleher, quoting Roland Delattre, points out that even in the specific discipline of liturgical studies, “Ritual action is always, in some aspects, political action because it ‘involves a mobilization of sentiment around a play for power in a field of alternative

⁸⁴ Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 74.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

versions of things.”⁸⁶ Ritual is a willing suspension of the typical way of acting and relating in life, a form of playful interaction with symbol, gesture, setting, body, and dynamics of power through the process. Ritual is political because it demands a group’s negotiation of roles and meanings in this ritualized alternative version or liminal space of reality.

Victor Turner’s foundational text, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-structure*, develops the concept of liminality in ritual, that transitional space outside regular lived experience, as manifested in *communitas*. *Communitas* is a structure of a community based in equality, manifested in ritual through a renegotiation of power structure and position. In the carefully curated confines of the ritual, this threatening overthrow of social structures and powers serves to alleviate social tension without toppling the order of life outside ritual practice.⁸⁷ Turner’s concept of *communitas* is present within the Eucharist as a relation between humanity and God. Through Christ, the movement of power exchange within ritual practice is manifested in the human-divine relationship. The Eucharistic Prayer B, for example, offers a clear vision of the movement of God in Christ to lowliness that results in the elevation of human beings:

[I]n these last days you sent [Christ] to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Margaret Mary Kelleher, “The Liturgical Body: Symbol and Ritual,” 58.

⁸⁷ Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Routledge, 1969) 109.

⁸⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 368.

Through the high—God—becoming low through the incarnation, the low—humanity—is brought from the low state to a higher one and unified to God in Christ.

However, this ritual does not address liminality or allow a performative shift of power dynamics among human beings, particularly not along the axis of race. The segregated nature of the church (both in intra-segregated communities with separate seating and practice for white and black members, and in the segregation of congregations along racial lines) prevents the reversal of power and roles among the concrete relations of the community. There is no ritual *communitas* formed or maintained across racial lines through the suspension or reversal of social powers. White Christians at Eucharist may allow Christ to take on the role of the literary “holy beggar” or “third son” in a prophetic and surprising witness, but are unlikely to see people of color in that status-challenging role, embraced as surprising messengers of God’s truth and will.⁸⁹ This absence of a multiracial or antiracist *communitas* among the whole Christian people through the ritual of the Eucharist results in an ethically skewed piety.

Racial inequalities in the United States are permitted to go ritually unaddressed by self-segregating white worshipping communities, with predilection toward white representations of Christ in theology, culture, and image. Of particular note, the whiteness of many figures on crucifixes in white sanctuaries almost seems to serve as a ritual inoculation against more challenging strains of theological reflection or divine claims on the community. Meeting a representation of Christ crucified creates some emotional and visual connection to the event of this death, but a white Jesus, along with its historical inaccuracies, prevents white theological imagination from conceiving of the

⁸⁹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 110.

crucified Christ as connected to people of color in our own communities. On the other hand, depictions of Jesus as a person of color in spaces of worship offers a different attitude of connection between the life and suffering of communities of color under white supremacy and the life and suffering of the Christ.⁹⁰

It follows that this Eucharistic ritual politics is not necessarily a politics of maintaining power and hierarchy, or a politics of stability, but takes different shapes of power-ordering according to the communities and contexts within which it is performed. Rather than making sense of pain through ritual, or establishing continuity and stability for a community, the ambiguous nature of ritual, which pulls its participants into a liminal state outside the usual conditions of being, articulates suffering rather than relieves it. Anderson and Foley, writing from a pastoral/practical theological perspective, see rituals themselves as dangerous, potentially disruptive to our way of life.

Ritual's capacity for expressing and creating meaning also endows it a potentially dangerous endeavor. Like the stories that frequently accompany them, rituals can bring to light truths that we would rather ignore or expose contradictions in our relationships we would rather not admit.⁹¹

These perspectives offer a dynamic paradox of ritual's relationship to community danger or threat, in which the formation and engagement of ritual can expose the gaps and inconsistencies between the articulated values or theology of a community and its practices. To combat ritualization of white supremacist Christianities, Seeman, Anderson

⁹⁰ One powerful example is the black pieta at Regina Mundi in Soweto. The black Madonna and child overlook the nave where anti-apartheid organizers gathered, student leaders were attacked and gassed (bullet holes remain in the altar and walls). After the fall of apartheid, Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings took place at the church. Decades long struggle for racial justice is reflected in the pieta, which forms part of the ritual context and performance.

⁹¹ Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals: Weaving Together the Human and the Divine*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 24.

and Foley's more provocative conceptualization of ritual function is crucial. Their push toward more ambiguous, dangerous, and truly liminal ritual practice requires suspicion towards any rituals that lead to a minimizing of discomfort around communities' privilege, power, and oppression.

Eucharistic practices and liturgies that obscure legacies of white supremacy, rather than unveiling them, are rituals that cannot lead to transformation because they fail to inhabit the eschatological and political possibilities of the liturgy. In the case of Eucharistic liturgies, the obscuring or unveiling elements lie beyond the texts of the rites, born out through the ritual space, participants, and the formation that occurs around and in preparation for the ritual. The Eucharist, for communities that are rooted in a sacramental theology and participate in this liturgy as their principal act of worship, holds a profoundly eschatological trajectory of meaning. The prayers of the liturgy articulate anticipation and suspension in a temporal narrative with such phrases as:

“He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end...” “We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.”⁹² “Christ will come again...” “At the last day bring us into the joy of your eternal kingdom.”⁹³ “We await his coming in glory.”⁹⁴ “In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country...”⁹⁵ “We celebrate his death and resurrection, as we await the day of his coming.”⁹⁶ Recalling Christ's death and his descent among the dead, proclaiming his resurrection and ascension to your right hand, awaiting his

⁹² *The Book of Common Prayer*, 359.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 363.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 368.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 369.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 371.

coming in glory...”⁹⁷

The meaning of the narrative and the sacrament, historically instituted and practiced in repetition over thousands of years, is held in the tension of sacred time, anticipating the future completion of Christ’s work and God’s kingdom in the fullness of time.

Proclamations of this expectation are shaped and filled by what has been revealed about God through God’s Word and in the life of Jesus, a vision of God’s desire for all people and creation. It is a spiritual and political proclamation of how things might be when the fullness of God is present in the world and humanity.

The distance between this vision and our present reality, expressed in ritual, is a liminal or transitory state. It is a temporary participation in the alternate form, or true form of reality that is the full presence of God among us. The inhabitation of this tension is enacted in the ritual, when participants take the elements in an act of unity with Christ but are not yet fully united to God. In this ritual liminality, participants also engage condensed, symbolic, and dramatic snapshot of the entire life of the believer and the church anticipating the eschaton. That limen, or threshold, between spiritual, cosmic, and ethical realities is multiple, unwieldy, and simultaneous. The tensions expressed in the liturgy and the doctrines of the community take place in multiple arenas of the church’s life and ministry and are expressed differently in the lives of the participants. “As such,” writes Turner, “their ambiguous and indeterminate attribute are expressed by a rich variety of symbols...” none of which can fully capture the sense of in-betweenness.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 374.

⁹⁸ Victor Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and John Mellow, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) 75.

This truth of ritual and anthropology is seen concretely in the variety of symbols for God and faith in the Christian tradition, but also very specifically in the need for multiple Eucharistic prayers and liturgical forms.

Social Incongruence and Transformation

Seligman et al note, “Ritual gains force where incongruence [between the usual state and the performed, alternative reality] is perceived and thought about.”⁹⁹ Social and political power structuring results from rituals that contain some elements of this self-awareness, a sense of the possibility and distance to the alternate reality. When this self-awareness is lacking in any particular plane of meaning, among the variety of symbols, it constitutes a failure of ritualization. Participants then cannot, as Bell says, “embody these schemes of perception and interpretation and deploy them in their social world.”¹⁰⁰ It stands to reason, then, that in terms of the problems of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the transformative not-me space of the rituals cannot speak to systemic justice for a community that is not aware of the incongruence between the kingdom of God expressed in the life and teaching of Christ, and the church’s complicity in historically rooted, embodied, and social systems of oppression. This is one area where the naturalization of white supremacist social structuring through the rhetoric of color-blindness is a particularly potent force of stasis. It is difficult to critically engage, through theological pedagogy or ritual action, concerns of racism which have been either silenced

⁹⁹ Adam B. Seligman, Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon, *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*, (New York: Oxford University press, 2008) 27.

¹⁰⁰ Catherine Bell, “Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals,” *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship*, ed. Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007) 171.

in public discourse, dismissed as “identity politics” and “political correctness,” or are commonly construed as fringe politics, over-reacting, the overblown sensitivities of a certain generation or interest group.

Color-blindness also prevents systemic structural change through the erasure of the incongruence of true diversity of social experience and historically rooted oppression. If, as Bonilla-Silva noted, part of the mechanism of this ideology is the historicizing of racial injustice and civil rights concerns, then it is very easy for ritualization around racial liberation to become a nostalgic memorial for the glories of a former movement or an observance of gratitude for work done in the past, without meaningful connection made to the present concerns of society of the daily lives of participants or their neighbors. When this occurs, it is not only a failure of ritualization and a missed opportunity for profound spiritual and social transformation, but it robs the assembly of the Eucharist itself with the ersatz theology of an empty liturgy. As Louis Weil writes,

The danger with even corporate liturgical rites is that they may touch the surface of people’s experience and yet not influence their liturgical piety in depth... a liturgy must be more than watched or heard: it must connect at the deepest levels with the realities of the worshiper’s life.¹⁰¹

Unofficial racial segregation continues to be a problem in U.S. American life, and it is possible for the predominantly white Episcopal Church to have many white members and communities who have little to no meaningful interaction with people of color. If social discourse and personal experience do not reveal discrepancy, much work must be done around education in order for rituals and liturgies focused on racial injustice to connect deeply to the lives of worshippers and bring awareness of the distance between the

¹⁰¹ Louis Weil, *Liturgical Sense: The Logic of Rite*, (New York: Seabury Books, 2013) 48.

ritual's horizon of meaning and alternate reality and the lived reality of racial oppression in the United States.

Bell's theory of ritualization, while emphatic in the ambiguous nature of ritual boundaries, maintains a clear distinction between ways of being within and beyond the ritual as a difference of sacred and profane. However, this understanding of ritualization's limits and characteristics might be inadequately ambiguous, too constrained to the ritual action, for a robust Christian sacramental theology and practice. For the church, the Eucharist is a ritualization that stretches beyond the limits of the church and its liturgy to form a social ethic and mystical orientation toward God's presence in the world in Christ and the continued active work of the Holy Spirit among creation and all persons. Here lies the breakdown between ritual studies from the anthropological lens and liturgical theology as a Christian commitment. Morrill argues that "the division of life into sacred and profane sectors," though not unique to the theology and ritual of Christianity, "is a fundamental flaw in Christian piety or liturgical consciousness."¹⁰² To divide these realms and set them against one another is to miss the transformative telos of Christian liturgical action. Bell's first categorization of ritual, then, must be abandoned as insufficient by the Christian liturgist. The community that seeks to accept this invitation to a wholly transformed self and community in light of the proclamation that "Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again" cannot ascribe to the separation of the sacrament from their lives and work.

¹⁰² Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000) 98.

For Christians, Bell's second point of ritualization, the application of new perceptions to lived social reality, constitutes the blurry boundary of the Eucharistic ritual. The post-communion prayers give the symbolic language framework for the continued ritualization beyond the scope of the liturgy of communion. First they re-articulate what has just happened in the ritual practice: "you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood," and "assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son, and heirs of your eternal kingdom."¹⁰³ This names the social identity building work of the ritual, and the historic foundation for its practice. The prayers go on: "Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart;" and "send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord." The liturgy of God's material presence, memorialized, re-enacted, and experienced through the element of communion, ends with a blessing for action, a charge to responsibility. The ritual is not complete without an ethical claim on the lives of its participants; the receiving of the sacraments is an active reception performed through being sent out.

This call is extended into the final moments of the liturgy, the deacon's dismissal. Proclaimed by the minister whose order and call are characterized by connecting the mission of the church and the needs of the world, the conclusion of the service is actually not a conclusion at all. The ritual's end is expressed through its extension, an active instruction and mandate to carry the ritual beyond itself. "Let us go forth in the name of

¹⁰³ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 365–366.

Christ; Go in peace to love and serve the Lord; Let us go forth into the world, rejoicing in the power of the Spirit; Let us bless the Lord.”¹⁰⁴ Go forth. Love and serve. Rejoice.

Bless. The ritual is not ended, the Eucharist is incomplete, unless the assembly takes on this commission. As Weil says of the liturgy, “When the fundamental symbols expressed in an authentic liturgical act take root in our daily lives, those symbols have the power to touch the deepest level of our humanity, leading us into a path of transformation.”¹⁰⁵ The authentic ritual act is known by its authentic results of transformation in the lives of the ritual participants, leaving a practical impact after they have departed the time and space of the ritual’s performance.

Rituals of White Supremacy and Their Legacy

Ritual’s performative and visionary nature is at work in the evil of white supremacist ritualization, such as lynching. Participation in ritual is a time and space between one’s daily lived reality and another possibility; it is the time and space between who one is at the ritual’s start and who one becomes through participation in the ritual. Seligman *et al.* name two assumptions in their ritual studies regarding the function of transitional space within ritual act. First, they suppose that this ritual enactment of a social shared reality is engaged by individual subjects. Second, they identify that ritual is not a remaking of reality as it subjunctively might be, but exists at a more nuanced edge, “working precisely out of the incongruity of the subjunctive of ritual and the actual world of lived experience.”¹⁰⁶ In the context of white supremacy, this performance consists of

¹⁰⁴ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 366.

¹⁰⁵ Weil, *Liturgical Sense*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Seligman et al, *Ritual and Its Consequences*, 27.

total white power in an attempt to live the fantasy of total control. The “common ‘could be,’” as Seligman et al name this state, creates the social boundaries of inner-community empathy and imagination, to strengthen the bonds among whites and bridging the distance from the present reality (incomplete control and the true dignity of all persons) to that evil domain of full discretionary power of whiteness.¹⁰⁷ To be sure, the power of white supremacy, particularly in the era of frequent radicalized lynching, teetered on the nuanced edge between a subjunctive, what society could be, and a manifest reality. The social power of whiteness in the United States has in times and places seemed total, the power and privilege of doing harm, even unto death, with impunity. The subjunctive potentiality gestured at within lynching and white supremacist terrorism is the idolatrous fantasy of complete and unshakeable power over society, life and death, expressed through power over people of color. It is a demonic vision of reality performed through horrific violence, often without social disapproval, much less active accountability or criminal prosecution.

Though the rituals reinforced this fantasy of unshakeable power, they were seen in harmony with the theology of many Christian communities and traditions. Seligman’s “incongruence” was out of the question for white lynching communities, whose theologies and social structures worked together to build a world in which this unspeakable violence against other human beings was reasonable, even God-ordained. “For them, racial segregation invoked the most profound mythologies that underlay the

¹⁰⁷ Seligman et al, *Ritual and Its Consequences*, 25.

white South's preconceptions of the proper ordering of the world," writes Paul Harvey.¹⁰⁸ Perceived cultural transgression and (albeit falsely accused) crimes against the white community, particularly white women, were a violation of divine ordering of human life. Engagement in the evil acts of murder and terrorism that characterized white treatment of black communities in the post-Reconstruction era, was justified as a moral responsibility for white men. Lynching and other forms of anti-black terrorism and violence was construed as putting the social order back to the way that God intended and maintaining appropriate responsibility for one's family, community, and well-being. Incomprehensible violence, traumatized and traumatizing, was justified and made conceivable through a socially constructed narrative, which was made to fit into a form of Christianity.¹⁰⁹ That narrative was rooted in the notion that survival and the preservation of deeply held values were dependent upon the execution of horrific deeds to another group of community members, who were so strongly construed to be other and less than the dominant group as to become sub-human.¹¹⁰ This psycho-social system was, in part, maintained by the ritualization of white supremacy. Transcendent, repeated, symbolic, and communal, it shaped the ethos of a people toward hatred and systemic violence.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Harvey, "Race, Religion, and Right in the South, 1945–1990," in *Politics and Religion in the White South*, ed. Glenn Feldman (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005) 108.

¹⁰⁹ Daniel Shaw, *Traumatic Narcissism: Relational Systems of Subjugation*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

¹¹⁰ Mattias Smångs, "Doing Violence, Making Race: Southern Lynching and White Racial Group Formation," *American Journal of Sociology* 121, No. 5 (March 2016): 1334.

In order to honor black liberation theology's connections of the cross and the lynching, the suffering Christ and the suffering African American community, within the context of the Eucharistic ritual, self-aware, white Christian liturgical engagement must acknowledge the other side of this ritualization and the ways in which it worked to shape generation after generation of white communities and their social/cultural imaginations. As Catherine Bell notes, "Ritualization can function either to accommodate history or to deny it."¹¹¹ It is to the continued peril of its integrity that the church denies this ugly history and the fundamentally liturgical and religious way in which it functioned. Hope for renewed visions of community belonging, hope for breaking the cycle of traumatized and traumatizing violence, hope for reclaiming the political ethics of the Eucharist depend on honestly accommodating its complicated history within our current narratives, theological pedagogy, and self-understanding as a broken people. Lauren Winner, in her work on the medieval host desecration tales and their endorsement of anti-Semitic violence and systemic oppression, notes that even at the last supper, the sacred meal held complex and compromised moral implications.

At its very inception, the Eucharist is fractured. One who receives immediately betrays the reception (and the Giver), and the betrayer's reception is inseparably the sign of his inability to receive; Judas's reception is about the fact that he will betray the reception.¹¹²

The remembrance of the Eucharist is clouded by competing memories and histories of perspective, the erasure of unsettling truths about the rite's own ambiguity, and the suppression of anamnesis that arises from oppressed peoples. The need to recognize

¹¹¹ Bell, "Ritual, Change, and Changing Rituals," 175.

¹¹² Lauren Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018) 55.

fuller histories might call on white worshipping communities to consider identification with the betraying Judas, who receives the sacrament, yet is not fully transformed by it or able to see beyond his individualistic reception of the sacred meal to a larger vision of community.

The Political Eucharist

William T. Cavanaugh writes, “A true social order is based not on defeat of enemies but on identification with victims through participation in Christ’s reconciling sacrifice. According to Augustine, then, the true sacrifice on which a true politics is based is the Eucharist.”¹¹³ The ethics and politics of the Eucharist as a sacrament of the church are grounded in the ethics of Jesus in the gospels and ritually performed within the context of the church’s liturgies. To understand this Eucharistic politic requires exploration of the political theology of Jesus Christ and how that theology is picked up in the liturgical rites of the church. In the context of this project, this theology and its ritual enactment is also seen as profoundly anti-racist and in line with the concerns of black liberation theology.

The politics and ethics of Eucharist are rooted in a profoundly embodied theology, starting with the particularity of Jesus Christ as a Palestinian Jew living under Roman occupation, and the story of his life, work, and physical suffering and death. William T. Cavanaugh’s *Torture and Eucharist* is a helpful starting point for understanding the embodiedness of Jesus and the embodiedness of the church in the world as the cornerstone of sacramental/political theological ethics. This text is an exploration of the liturgical dynamics of disappearing and torture in the Pinochet regime in Chile, and the ways that the Eucharist, a liturgical remembrance of a tortured man, connects to the recent experiences of torturous political regimes and serves as the counter-politics to them. This era of Chilean history raises questions of theodicy, of the

¹¹³ Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist*, 11.

relationship of the church to the state, and of the moral responsibilities of Christians living under oppressive systems of oppression, either of themselves or of their neighbors.

The Mystical Body of Christ

The Mystical Body of Christ, understood in the Catholic tradition as the church and the Eucharist, is a key point of concern for this political theology, constituting the fundamental identity from which ethical and political practice arise. For Cavanaugh, the mystical body of Christ must be expansive, temporal, communally engaged, and morally compelling. It is expansive beyond what any particular Christians can identify or define, exceeding our imaginations for membership. As Dorothy Day, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, noted, “St. Augustine says that we are all members or potential members of the Mystical Body of Christ. Therefore, all men are our neighbors.”¹¹⁴ This is also the fundamental ethic of Jesus’ teaching. The parable of the good Samaritan is a response to a question of ethical inclusion: “Who is my neighbor?” and pushes its audience to consider that the neighbor, the one to whom we are bound in our faith, is the most surprising outsider. To take seriously this claim, Christians must take seriously their ethical obligation to those who are beyond the church and beyond their other identity groups or communities of belonging, even to the point of humbling ourselves to receive from these so-called “others.”¹¹⁵ The church’s concern and the scope of the Eucharistic politics cannot be limited to those who we have admitted and

¹¹⁴ Dorothy Day, “The Mystical Body of Christ,” *The Catholic Worker* (October 1939) quoted in Cavanaugh, 221.

¹¹⁵ Interpretation of this parable is influenced by the teaching and scholarship of Amy-Jill Levine, from her 2015 “Parables” seminar at Vanderbilt Divinity School and her book, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*, (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2015).

acknowledged or only to our dealings within the realm of ecclesiology. The politics of the Eucharist must extend beyond the church to the whole of humanity, and all the church's public engagement.

The Body in the Eucharist is temporal, because it reflects both a historical moment and an anticipated future in the present moment. The historical grounding of the sacrament is Christ's Last Supper, and the assembly's re-enactment is interpreted as symbolic not only of that particular meal, but the entire gospel narrative surrounding it, the betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The church, as Jesus' disciples, is invited to consume his body and blood in solidarity with him, in intimate connection to those events of his life. The eschatological dimension of the liturgy, explored in the Rite II Eucharist earlier, brings in the futuristic temporal element, but it is an anticipated time that exceeds the human category of the future. The Eucharist is celebrated, as Alexander Schmemmann emphasizes, on the Lord's Day, the mystical eighth day of the church's worship that marks the Kingdom of God made present in our midst.¹¹⁶ In the ritual enactment, participants are, in some sense, removed from time and confronted with a different temporal ordering. In the strange time of Eucharist, the past event of the Last Supper is made present, and the coming event of Christ's return has already happened, catching the Church in a moment of unity through time with God.

The eschatological in-breaking that designates the temporal nature of the Mystical Body of Christ also marks its communal participatory nature. The work of the Eucharist must be the work of the whole assembly. It is the entire Body of Christ, participating in

¹¹⁶ Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 99.

the whole action of the Eucharist, not just the clergy and the words of institution.¹¹⁷

Proclaiming the promises and work of God, recalling the Last Supper and Christ's death, resurrection, and coming again, and consuming the flesh and blood in the elements incorporates the church into the life and materiality of Jesus Christ. As Schmemmann writes, "[The Eucharist] is participation in the Kingdom as the parousia, as the presence of the Resurrected and Resurrecting Lord... the Church's participation in His heavenly glory."¹¹⁸ It cannot be emphasized enough that this is the whole church's participation, regardless of order of ministry or level of attention and piety on a particular day. We are, all of us, however we are, the body of Christ.

Finally, the visibility of the Eucharist as the sign of the church is fundamentally an ethical commitment. The Pauline teachings on the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Corinthians emphasize community integrity, care for the marginalized, and the eschatological judgment of God in the context of the shared meal. The church in the Eucharist, the mystical body of Christ, is called to Christ's mission by the participation in this sacrament. The church is recognized by its exemplification of the ethics of the Kingdom of God, manifesting the unification of God and earth in the person of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁹ In this picture of the Mystical Body of Christ, the church, partaking in the Eucharist, cannot separate itself from the moral demands of its social context, but actively resist evil in the world. This is, as the postcommunion prayer says, "the work

¹¹⁷ Cavanaugh, 230.

¹¹⁸ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, quoted in Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 104.

¹¹⁹ Cavanaugh, 240-242.

[God has] given us to do, to love and serve [God] as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”¹²⁰

This understanding of the Mystical Body of Christ is a dynamic reality that shapes the telos of theological ethics. A social ethics framework rooted in this theology of Christ, the church, and the sacraments inhabits the tension of the spiritual and the embodied. Its mystical nature prevents oversimplified alignment of God’s Kingdom with a social utopia. And yet, its embodiment prevents abstraction and neglect of the concrete realities in which God in Christ lived, and in which we live. It is realistic and tangible, and yet maintains its hope for redemption. “To Think of our human being in the world as the mystical body of Christ,” writes Shawn Copeland, “retunes our being to the eschatological at the core of the concrete, reminds us of our inalienable relation to one another in God, and steadies our efforts on that absolute future on God can give.”¹²¹ This framework guides the balance of trusting the work of God and engaging our work as God’s body. Sacramental theology, at its best, offers not only the call to social and political engagement, but also offers the parameters for communities at work to know their own limitations and turn, again and again, to the grace of God as their guide and sustenance.

The Anamnesis

In the Eucharistic prayers, the anamnesis, the portion of the liturgy following the words of institution and Jesus’ admonition, “Do this in remembrance of me,” carry

¹²⁰ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 366.

¹²¹ M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009) 103.

important function in ritualization and strengthening the connection between the liturgy and the lived ethics of Christianity. The narrative of Christ's example at the last supper is the foundation of the call of the anamnesis, and the invitation to the Church to join into the story of Jesus in the Eucharist. Louis-Marie Chauvet articulates this invitation into the liturgy as a form of recognition. "By citing Jesus at the last supper, the church sees itself in fact cited by him, its Lord, cited to act."¹²² The sacrament's regular and continual practice draws the worshipping community into a stronger memory of this narrative. The repetition strengthens identity, nourishing the people of God to give love and bear witness in society over and over again.

In his political and liturgical theology, Bruce Morrill sees this anamnesis, this remembrance, as a socially and politically provocative form of memory, and critical for the Christian disciple, one who seeks to model their life after that of Jesus Christ. Violence is intrinsic to the Eucharist as the ritual of consuming the broken body of a tortured and killed man, and anamnesis offers liturgical entry point to right relationship to that violence.¹²³ Morrill writes, "Just as the narrative memory [anamnesis] of Jesus is of his kenotic service in solidarity with the suffering even unto death, so the imitatio Christi is about a life lived with interest in the suffering of others..."¹²⁴ We remember his death,

¹²² Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2001) 134.

¹²³ Lauren Winner's exploration of the inherent violence of the Eucharist and the potential for perversions of its intention and performance offers both a helpful framing of this political Eucharistic theology and a historic critique of its optimistic vision for shaping just and nonviolent communities. Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice*, 35.

¹²⁴ Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 189.

“Christ has died,” and remember that his death was the culmination of a life of radical and politically engaged care of others. When we remember his death, we are also to remember all those who are killed by unjust systems, all those that suffer, those with whom Jesus lived in solidarity and love.

Because God reveals Godself in the context of human history and human flesh, God is “a God whom people can know only by practically committing themselves to God’s vision for that history. Theology must thereby employ what Metz calls an anamnestic form of reason, rational argumentation that cannot dispense with remembering the content of salvation history as a history of suffering that cries out for justice. This commitment to narrative and praxis is what characterizes political theology...all Christian theology is necessarily (fundamentally) political theology.”¹²⁵ As the epistle of James puts it, Christians are to be “doers of the word, and not merely hearers,” and the words of the liturgy, quoting from the scripture, are to shape our lives beyond the liturgy. Christians gather in worship and go out into the world. Christians hear and do. The liturgies and worship of the church are to be the springboard for a whole life of discipleship. When the anamnesis is prayed all together in assembly, the church remembers that it is involved in the story of Christ, his death, resurrection, and anticipated return. In hearing and proclaiming our remembrance of Christ, enacting physical solidarity with him by consuming bread and wine, the church commits also to put this living memory of Jesus into practice in our own lives. The ritual places the assembly into the story and draws that core kernel of the faith story into the here and now.

¹²⁵ Morrill on Metz, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 18.

Part of our active remembrance and discipleship, then, is to take on Christ's mantle of political and social witness and engagement. This is not with the idea that we will establish some utopia within the existing structures of human nature and society. However, with the hope of "Christ will come again," we partner with God and one another to make God's justice and liberation eschatologically present, albeit imperfectly and incompletely, through the practice of divine love and justice by the body of Christ. Speaking to and acting on the social realities of our day is simply a way of loving our neighbors as ourselves. It is how we love our neighbors in public, considering the common life to which Christians are called, and modeling themselves after Jesus' self-emptying.

The anamnesis is picked up again as a theme in the work of M. Shawn Copeland, as she discusses the Eucharist in *Enfleshing Freedom*. For her, the liturgical moment of remembrance of Christ's suffering extends to the suffering of others, particularly black victims of violence.

Solidarity begins in an *anamnesis*, which intentionally remembers and invokes the black victims of history, martyrs for freedom. Theologically considered, their suffering, like the suffering of Jesus, seeds new life for the future of all humanity. Their suffering, like the suffering of Jesus, anticipates an enfleshment of freedom and life to which Eucharist is linked ineluctably.¹²⁶

The anamnesis, which includes not only Christ's death, but also the resurrection and the anticipated coming, is the key to solidarity between those who have suffered at the hands of white supremacy and Jesus of Nazareth. Her sacramentally-oriented theology moves one step beyond James Cone's claim that "God transformed lynched black bodies into the

¹²⁶ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 124.

recrucified body of Christ,” for the anamnesis holds more than the statement of the death of Jesus Christ.¹²⁷ This sacramental theology, mutually shaped by liturgical practice, goes on to assert that, in the anamnesis and the solidarity with Christ, these victims are also resurrected and glorified, the new life of humanity and the anticipated coming of the grace-filled parousia.

The Political Eucharist and Racial Justice

The anamnesis is the Church’s ritual truth-telling within the Eucharistic liturgy, and a refusal to tell the story of white supremacy’s victims in the context of the church constitutes a failure to remember the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and a failure to re-member the Body of Christ. The church that embodies white supremacy cannot truly embody the mystical union with Christ in the Eucharist; it is dismembered in its silence and ethical disconnect from the sacred meal of the broken body of Jesus. Ethicist Katie Grimes challenges the Mystical Body of Christ at the point of its failure around racial justice: “In the Eucharist, we must ‘become what we receive.’ For this reason, if the church does not comprise the living sign of the body it celebrates, then it has not received the body of Christ.”¹²⁸ To truly receive the body of Christ, the bread of heaven and the blood of Christ, the cup of salvation, the church must re-member itself and be transformed as an agent of social change and anti-racist liberation. Then the church will be receiving not only the elements, but the identity of Christ’s body as ritually conveyed by bread and wine, and ethically manifested in the world.

¹²⁷ Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 158.

¹²⁸ Katie Walker Grimes, *Christ Divided: Anti-blackness as Corporate Vice*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2017) 227.

The Eucharist is, as Copeland writes, a countersign to the violence toward people of color, particularly black U.S. Americans.¹²⁹ It is a sign of the broken body redeemed, reuniting even as it is broken. It is a source of nourishment in community, and an anticipation of glorification and resurrection. And the grace and truth encapsulated in the broken and crucified body of God exposes our social violence, shows the possibilities of our complicity in acts of horror to preserve our comfort and security.

Understanding the contextual significance of this sacrament, enacted and received in white supremacist capitalist patriarchal America, is vital to deepen the church's experience of Jesus Christ expressed in it. Copeland writes, "Only those who follow the example of the Crucified and struggle on the side of the exploited, despised, and poor will discover [Jesus] at their side."¹³⁰ Because the Eucharist bridges the physical and historical body of Jesus to the mystical body of Christ, it rejoins the body and soul of human beings as well, resisting the tendency of white supremacy to ignore, abuse, and silence human flesh. Because the Eucharist connects us all to the oppressed Christ, whites are given the hard and true gift of facing and being reconciled to the vulnerability and mortality that white supremacy works so hard to deny. Because the Eucharist is economic and nourishing, the church is equipped and mandated to the work of racial justice and restoration, not only to dream an alternative form of being together in the world, but to participate with the Holy Spirit in the work of manifesting a more equitable distribution of nourishment, affirmation of dignity, and community resource.

¹²⁹ Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 124.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

White Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Liturgics

Understanding complex racial history in the United States, engaging with black liberation theologies, and being shaped through our ritual practice to become people of a Eucharistic politics and ethics all require practical adaptations within our faith communities. While adaptations are highly contextual, and many Episcopal communities in the United States face other forms of white supremacy than the anti-black racism focused on here, the following practices of pedagogy, liturgical engagement, truth-telling, and confession and discipline are broadly applicable. The liturgical considerations are, of course, specific to the liturgies and rite of the Episcopal Church, but as ecumenical referencing through this project, particularly to the Roman Catholic theological tradition, and the ELCA and PCUSA denominations, indicates that comparable practices in worship and ecclesiology are included within the following categories of Christian congregational praxis.

Liturgical Awareness through Liberative Pedagogy

Connecting faith communities' liturgical practice and sacramental awareness to the realities of white supremacy in our world and the possibilities of black liberation theology poses a challenge that exceeds many tradition models of Christian education and parish pedagogy. The conditions and damage of white supremacy include an attitude of control and mastery, which also characterizes much of traditional attitudes toward education and learning. The false insistence on objective theological perspectives, for example, may be construed as the search for truth, or theological reflection according God's word, but ultimately denies the subjectivity of all human theological reflection, and consequently, denies the legitimacy of reflection beyond the white, typically male,

canon of theology. To effectively teach diverse and complex theology, Christian histories, biblical interpretations, and traditions and practice of spiritual formation, liberative content must be conveyed through liberative pedagogy.

What constitutes a pedagogical approach of liberation and intersubjective truth seeking? Paolo Freire, the Brazilian educator and philosopher, and literary theorist bell hooks who studied his work, both offer deep wisdom for engaging in learning with the radical commitment to solidarity with those who suffer injustice. Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, focuses on education in oppressed communities and the work of tapping into communities' innate wisdom and tools for freedom. It is not written to the privileged and powerful, but within its pages, the educator's awareness of the necessary inner work for true solidarity offers formative insights for the privileged and powerful. Resistance to those in power is a key part of the work of liberation of those who suffer, but there is also room for the powerful to join into the work. Freire calls their education toward this end "conversion to the people...a powerful rebirth."¹³¹ Through practices of solidarity and living alongside the oppressed, through willingness to let their paradigm be challenged, those who benefit from systems of oppression can be transformed into agents of liberation.

To integrate this form of pedagogical practice in the parish requires an experiential component. This might include education beyond the education hour or sermon, directing back to practical experience, or seeking out experiential learning through pilgrimage and community engagement as part of theological education and

¹³¹ Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000) 61.

spiritual formation for the parish. It also requires a shift in the rhetoric and teaching styles traditionally imparted to clergy and catechists. The impartation of knowledge from the mastered teacher to the empty student, what Freire calls the banking method of education, results in a submersion of consciousness. It shapes the learner into the image of the teacher, admits them into that “objective” canon of knowledge. Instead, presenting problems and questions, along with the information needed to engage with them, and stepping back from the authoritative position to co-learner, allows the “*emergence of consciousness and critical intervention.*”¹³² The empowered and critical learner can create and discover, can shape their peers and teachers, can change the very horizons of knowledge and the frameworks that dictate our social realities. In the work of presenting and equipping white Christian communities with richer histories, hard truths, and complex theologies, white educators must resist the temptation to be the liberated and knowledgeable authority. Otherwise, the classroom or the pulpit become another frontier for the controlling and policing work of whiteness, a warped effort that offer no liberation from the spiritual harm done to whites by white supremacy. The inner work of refusing this temptation, seeing antiracist work as a new accomplishment to achieve, knowledge to master, and world to control, is part of the process and work of ministry.

In her reflections on multicultural education, bell hooks identifies this pedagogical tendency as one of fear of the loss of control and inability to adapt to new forms of education and the community knowledge process.

Most of us were taught in classrooms where styles of teaching reflected the notion of a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to

¹³² Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 81.

believe was universal...As a consequence, many teachers are disturbed by the political implications of multicultural education because they fear losing control in a classroom where there is no one way to approach a subject—only multiple ways and multiple references.¹³³

For white Christians in church leadership, whose model of education in our schools, universities, and seminaries neglected robust exposure to social analysis and liberation theologies beyond the white orthodox canon, venturing into a non-hierarchical, facilitative theological pedagogy can be intimidating, to say the least.¹³⁴ To walk alongside those in our care, not ahead of them, requires deep faith and an even deeper humility and resilience to face honestly our own struggles with white supremacy and continued failure to perfectly understand other perspectives, remember complex histories, correctly use evolving vocabularies of justice, eliminate personal bias, or discern what individual work we are called to do. But faithful journeying alongside the communities we serve is the key to transformative pedagogy that can change our sense of identity as privileged communities, informed our liturgical participation for greater ritual transformation, and build the foundations of trust necessary for white communities and powerful traditions to honestly reckon with their pasts and work toward a different future.

¹³³ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, (New York: Routledge, 1994) 35–36.

¹³⁴ It is worth mentioning that “orthodoxy” as a category for theological reflection and doctrine has historically been determined by white, cis-het men with significant positions of authority, and holds political connotation as a category which holds the power to silence “heterodoxy” from the margins. This is not to refute that faith communities need standards of doctrine or commitments of belief, but to note the loaded nature of this terminology in the context of discussing diverse theological reflection stemming from socially conditioned lived experiences.

Truth Telling and Complex Histories

The 1999 *Facing Racism* report from the Presbyterian Church (USA) noted, “Confession is good for the soul and essential for renewing our spirits.” Jennifer Harvey remarks, “If to engage history is to confess, then confession necessarily calls up the question of repair.”¹³⁵ Historically informed racial justice preaching, teaching, and liturgy is integrated with present realities, and calls its participants into action. One of the most fundamental practices for spiritual and social transformation is truth-telling, comprehensive historical narrative, confession. In a society where a simplistic narrative of U.S. American triumphalism is all too common, where the editorial decisions of textbooks and syllabi continue to privilege the perspectives of white men, and where the narrative of racial justice too easily ends with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., providing complex historical narratives in the backdrop of Christian formation and the church’s discourse can be a radical act. For the Episcopal Church, in particular, which has been a progressive Christian denomination (with a few, exceptional dioceses) for the full inclusion of women and the LGBTQ+ community, complicating our identity with inconsistent ethical past can be painful and elicit resistance.

For white Christians, authentic confession also requires an authentic encounter with the raced “other.” Earnestly seeking to learn from people of color, to understand the difference experiences of life in the United States according to skin color, is a vital piece for transformed thinking and social action. The authentic encounter is not an encounter of charity or pity, which maintains emotional separation and social hierarchy. As Freire writes, “No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed by

¹³⁵ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 206.

treating them as unfortunates and by presenting for their emulation models from among the oppressors.”¹³⁶ While charitable support is one form of combating social ills resulting from systemic oppression, this action, however dignified and good-hearted, should never be confused with mutual relationship. That risks a self-congratulatory paternalism that reinforces pernicious forms of benevolent racism. Surrendering commitment to the familiar narrative, comfort, and expectation of knowledge or superiority are key for transformative truth-hearing.

For some whites, such experiences of authentic encounter across difference occur naturally in the scope of personal and professional life, but the continuously maintained self-segregation and social isolation of whites, observed in Bonilla-Silva et al, makes this an unlikely expectation for many within the Episcopal tradition. Seeking out relationships or experiences with people of color for personal education and transformation is highly problematic, commodifying people of color for the self-advancement of whites and placing the burden of education around their experiences onto people of color. In this era, however, the access to authentic encounter is readily available in digital media and educational platforms, multicultural news outlets, and in many areas of the country, multicultural community opportunities (when they are not actively avoided by whites). For white communities seeking transformation and mindful of their own responsibility for growth, personal narratives from people of color are available in podcasts, film, documentary, and essays. Engagement with narrative in this way holds possibility for transformed social awareness, provides language and context, and can present whites with complex, varying views of racial experiences in America.

¹³⁶ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 54.

All of this truth telling and listening is necessary, even and especially when it leads to more questions than answers, challenging the monolith of a single story or challenging the truth-listener to consider competing narratives. As the radical alternative historian Howard Zinn wrote, “The point is that the element of this web [of the social narrative] are historical, not ‘natural.’ That does not mean that they are easily disentangled, dismantled. It means only that there is a possibility for something else.”¹³⁷ Anti-racist truth telling does not seek to give only one truth, a new objectivity that falls into the trap of ideological whiteness’ monolithic narrative. Rather, by accepting and exploring non-dominant narratives, by truly hearing one another, we can compile a richer, fuller, more wondrous and true account.

Confession and Discipline

Truth telling is incomplete if it does not transform communities. As Lopez writes, “the truly intersubjective encounter with the Other must constitute a moment of reckoning and of accountability.”¹³⁸ Yes, the confessional element Harvey elevates begins with truth telling and complex narratives, which can be actions of justice in and of themselves. But this confession also demands lamentation, deep personal and inner-communal reflection, and, so as not to be empty, reckoning and accountability. Confessions of sin in the Episcopal Church, while also accommodated by the rite of reconciliation, are most often negotiated in the context of corporate worship. In the personal and social mesh of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, connection into this

¹³⁷ Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: Harper Collins, 1980) 38.

¹³⁸ Alfred J. Lopez, “Whiteness After Empire,” 15–16.

liturgical form can be a powerful spiritual experience. Intentional connection, perhaps in preaching, between communal structural sin and the communal repentance of sin can raise awareness of our social situation as a spiritual concern, a concern of God and God's people.

Harvey is wary of the too often white-centric category of "reconciliation" between the races, a framework which can easily alleviate conscience with addressing root causes of suffering. Instead, she points to a different understanding of the word as part of her argument for reparations. She turns to Native American theologian and historian Vine Deloria, Jr.'s call to Christians to be reconciled to the land: "Would it be fair to say reconciliation is what Christians must be about, not reconciling souls to Christ, but reconciling themselves to the land?"¹³⁹ Harvey considers the implication for whites of being reconciled to the unjust structures in our society. What is the work of being reconciled to our incarceration system, current patterns of criminalization of children and youth, racially disproportionate poverty and representation?¹⁴⁰ Such forms of reconciliation necessitate that the penitent move beyond acknowledgment of wrongdoing to take restorative action. The demonic nature of white supremacy's social orderings is (or must become) unacceptable to Christians. To be reconciled to our social systems, to live at peace with them, we must take action to challenge and change the systems, and to challenge and change their toxicity in our lives and souls.

¹³⁹ Vine Deloria, Jr., "God is Also Red: An Interview with Vine Deloria, Jr." interview by James R. McGraw, *Christianity and Crisis* 35 (Sept. 1975) 296, quoted in Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 160.

¹⁴⁰ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, 160–162.

Liturgical Formation and Adaptations

Louis Weil's *Liturgical Sense* offers a broad overview of liturgical theology that highly values the liturgy as a reflection of every order of ministry and a primary means of holistic Christian transformation. In his historical exploration of Eucharistic participation, Weil identifies the loss of the catechumenate as a significant contributor to medieval clericalist abuses in the church.¹⁴¹ His concern for education extends to present-day worshiping communities, and the need for deeper theological education and engagement among the church in order for spiritual and communal transformation to occur through sacramental practice. Ideally, liturgical education is an activity engaged both formally and informally in the life of the church, appearing in Christian education opportunities, preaching, conversation, creatively brought into activities of parish life and fellowship, serving and learning through practice in the preparations and components of worship, and throughout families' process of formation in the home through the church year and practices of prayer.

The Episcopal Church's available liturgical resources already offer a number of rich possibilities for liturgical adaptation that weave together informed and self-aware liturgical practice with the social implications of white supremacy and ethical call to address and resist it in our communities. *The Book of Common Prayer* Rite II Eucharistic liturgies are explored most fully in this project, but the denomination's existing supplemental materials also provide opportunities for ethically informed liturgical practice. *Enriching Our Worship I* includes new language for prayers that may serve particular occasions or communities seeking to weave together the work of racial justice

¹⁴¹ Weil, *Liturgical Sense*, 49.

into liturgical settings. In *The Book of Occasional Services*, both the Public Service of Healing and the Litany for the Mission of the Church offer social healing and social responsibility as prominent features in the liturgy.¹⁴² This text is also noteworthy in its inclusion of liturgies in Spanish. Rather than the relegation of such resources to a separate, specialized volume, editorial inclusion points the church toward the racial and ethnic diversity in our culture and denomination. *A Great Cloud of Witnesses*, the Episcopal Church's most recent resource for liturgical commemorations, also offers opportunities for truth-telling and spiritual formation beyond the white-dominant tradition. Inclusion of stories, prayers, and theology of black Episcopal leaders and traditions provides liturgical opportunities for recognition of the evils of white supremacy in the United States and to learn from those who struggled against systemic injustice toward racial equality.

¹⁴² The Episcopal Church, *The Book of Occasional Services—2003*, (New York: Church Publishing, 2004) 166–173, 246–248.

Adaptation and Formation in Context: A Case Study

There is incredible potential to bring together churches' existing need for theologically informed worship with formation around white supremacy and God's call to resist it and work for justice. Bringing together an informed liturgy with the particular truth telling of a specific community connects the universal Mystical Body of Christ with the local history and current social situation. In my ministry context, last autumn, there was such an opportunity to bring together the liturgy and theological education with an existing community program. Many members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, along with hundreds of other residents of Chattanooga, Tennessee, have learned and been impassioned by the story of Ed Johnson, and have become involved in the Ed Johnson Project, a grass roots effort to increase awareness of this local story of the brutality of white supremacy, rippling out from the life and suffering of one man to impact an entire community and set a precedent for national law.

The Ed Johnson Story

Ed Johnson was a black resident of Chattanooga, Tennessee, who was wrongfully accused of raping a white woman. His was the first and only criminal case to be tried by the United States Supreme Court, and his lynching in downtown Chattanooga, long ignored by local white history and culture, has recently been revived in the community's narrative.¹⁴³ The lynching of Ed Johnson has gained greater awareness in the Chattanooga, Tennessee area through the efforts of community history projects, a House resolution to acknowledge the wrong, and the publication of Mark Curriden and Leroy

¹⁴³ Emily Yellin, "Lynching Victim is Cleared of Rape, 100 Years Later," <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/27/us/lynching-victim-is-cleared-of-rape-100-years-later.html> (Accessed 29 December 2018).

Phillips' book, *Contempt of Court: The Turn-of-the-Century Lynching That Launched a Hundred Years of Federalism*. The city of Chattanooga has made formal plans to build a sculpture monument by artist and poet Jerome Meadows, right by the Walnut Street Bridge, where several lynchings occurred. Filmmaker Linda Duvoisin has also created a documentary of the events surrounding the Supreme Court case and Ed's murder, titled, *I Am A Innocent Man*.

In January 1906, a young white woman was attacked, strangled to unconsciousness, and raped. Ed's name was given to authorities after several days had passed with no leads, with the incentive of a cash reward. The victim was unable to identify Ed as the perpetrator, not to mention unable to confidently assert that the assailant was African American. Ed's accuser was discredited, and he had multiple alibis from family and friends who could confirm his whereabouts at the time of the attack. During the trial, the jury, not representative of Chattanooga or persons who could reasonably be considered Ed's peers, lashed out at the defendant with verbal and physical violence and threats. In spite of all these factors, Ed was sentenced by the local court to death. With the advocacy of two black lawyers, Noah Parden and Styles Hutchins, Ed's case was successfully appealed to the Supreme Court, which granted a stay of execution by Justice John Marshall Harlan. This court decision was met with local rage at perceived federal overreach. A front-page news article that said though the execution was stayed, surely a lynch mob would kill him. Sure enough, the predicted, or perhaps galvanized mob, armed with guns and sledgehammers, removed Johnson from the jail, with the compliance of Sheriff Joseph Shipp. Ed Johnson was taken to the Walnut Street Bridge downtown. He was hung from the bridge trestles and shot fifty times. A police officer in

the mob pinned a note to the body reading, “To Justice Harlan, here’s your Negro. Save him now.”¹⁴⁴

Pedagogy and Practice

The story of Ed Johnson’s murder is, tragically, a national story. The work of the Equal Justice Initiative has shed light on the presence of lynching in communities across the country and called those communities into account and grief for this legacy. In an effort to understand, learn and grow, last fall, a small group from St. Paul’s went to Pleasant Gardens Cemetery in Chattanooga, where Ed Johnson was buried, for a walking tour. The cemetery was closed off from the public since 1970 and has not been well maintained. That day, the hilly 22 acres were a flush of fall colors, and we crunched over leaves as we walked among the graves. The group was led by two neighborhood residents who volunteer their time to maintain the cemetery and are knowledgeable about this part of their community’s history. We learned about the history of the cemetery, its public closure under disinterested private ownership, and some of the people who are buried there. When we had made our way to the far corner of the cemetery, we found Ed’s grave, an unremarkable stone but for his last words, “God bless you all, I am a innocent man.”*[sic]* The guides shared the story of Ed’s murder, and we stood together for some time in silence before sharing the Eucharist.

There were several preliminary concerns in constructing this service. Logistically, the service needed to be short and simple, with minimal accouterments and moving parts, as the graveside was a quarter mile walk over rocky terrain. The St. Paul’s parish is not

¹⁴⁴ Michael Curriden, “Contempt of Court,” 15 November 1999. <https://www.c-span.org/video/?153643-1/contempt-court>. (Accessed 29 October 2018).

exclusively white, and the invitation to join this tour and eucharist was extended to an African Methodist Episcopal partner parish in town, so there was particular sensitivity that diverse racial groups would hold dramatically different experiences and nuances of emotional response to the tour, the sight of the unkempt cemetery, and to sharing in prayers by the grace of a lynching victim. It was important to give attention and honor to black theology and tradition while not moving into the realm of appropriation on the part of white clergy leadership. Clarity in connecting Ed's suffering and death with the suffering and death of Christ was the primary formational goal, and the service needed to strike a balance between grief, repentance, and gritty hope.

As this service was not the principal Eucharist, there was a great degree of freedom in liturgical planning. The collect used was the prayer "For the whole human family." The psalm and gospel, Psalm 85:7–13 and Matthew 5:43–48, were taken from the propers for peace, and the lesson was Amos 5:14-15, 23-24.¹⁴⁵ In response to the Word, a lector read "To Overcome Evil" by Howard Thurman.¹⁴⁶ For the prayers of the

¹⁴⁵ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 931.

¹⁴⁶ "I see the strength to overcome evil. I seek the strength to overcome the tendency to evil in my own heart. I recognize the tendency to do to the unkind thing when the mood of retaliation or revenge rides high in my spirit; I recognize the tendency to make of others a means to my own ends; I recognize the tendency to yield to fear and cowardice when fearlessness and courage seem to fit easily into the pattern of my security. I seek the strength to overcome the tendency to evil in my own heart. I see the strength to overcome the evil that is present all about me. I recognize the evil in much of the organized life about me; I recognize the evil in the will to power as found in groups, institutions, and individuals; I recognize the terrible havoc of hate and bitterness which makes for fear and panic in the common life. I seek the strength to overcome the evil that is present all about me. I seek the strength to overcome evil; I must not be overcome by evil. I seek the purification of my own heart, the purging of my own motives; I seek the strength to withstand the logic of bitterness, the terrible divisiveness of hate, the demonic triumph of the conquest of others. What I seek for myself I desire with all my heart for

people, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's "End Racism Sunday" worship resource was adapted to the following prayers, which include the confession. Rather than following these prayers with the peace, the celebrant continued into the liturgy of the table in an intentional delay of response to the confession of sin within the prayers, to just before the distribution.¹⁴⁷ The Eucharistic Prayer 2 from *Enriching Our Worship* was chosen. Just before an offertory sentence, I gave a brief remark about Cone's connection of the cross and the lynching tree, articulating the intention that we would participate in and remember Christ's passion while also honoring and remembering the death of Ed, our brother in Christ and the communion of saints.

The informality of the setting and change of liturgy did not detract from the solemnity of the liturgy. Before we began, one parishioner, a local florist, laid a small bouquet of red roses by the headstone in a simple gesture: a traditional honoring of the dead and a traditional honoring of Christ's altar. The group stood in a rough circle around the foot of the grave, and the four lay lectors, celebrant, and me spoke from our places within the circle. The natural setting was quiet, as we were the only visitors to the cemetery that day, and people leaned in toward one another to hear the unamplified voices. Worshippers were visibly moved, and a reverent quiet filled the spaces between the words of the liturgy. Before the dismissal, thanks were offered to all for being

friend and foe alike. I seek the strength to overcome evil." Howard Thurman, *Meditations of the Heart*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999) 164–165.

¹⁴⁷ From Marion J. Hatchett: "The Roman rite, in the fifth century, transferred the peace to the time of the breaking of the bread, as an immediate preparation for communion." *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury Press, 1980) 345. Thanks to my colleague at St. Paul's, the Rev. Joe Woodfin, for bringing this option to light as a helpful ritual mechanism for this contextual liturgy.

present, and afterward, the group slowly dispersed, walking and talking quietly on their way back to the cemetery's gates.

Developing the Liturgy

The opening collect was chosen to honor the racial diversity of the group, and identify both the internal/spiritual and social dimensions of racism:

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all nations and races may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*¹⁴⁸

However, there is concern in the work of racial justice that reconciliation and harmony are premature without laying the groundwork for the possibility of equal agency in relationship through the remedy of systemic injustice. Concern for an over-simplistic, and white-pacifying interpretation of this collect is precisely why the selection from the prophet Amos was included. The lesson is the prophet's call to Israel to honor God with the establishment of a more just society, which is a truer worship than festivals and assemblies, and occurs as a reckoning in light of the day of the Lord's judgement. It is a harsh but beautiful text, famously quoted by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," a rebuke and call to clergy who were inactive in the fight for civil rights.¹⁴⁹ The psalm affirms God's speaking to God's people, intervening with love, faithfulness, kindness, and peace. The gospel is Jesus' instruction to "love your

¹⁴⁸ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 815.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html (Accessed 15 September 2018).

enemies and pray for those who persecute you,” calling individuals within a community to a higher standard of regard for one another. These texts balance the need for divine intervention in any work we might do for a better world, and the directive to take action and actively seek God’s transformation in our lives.

That balance is seen also in the prayers, which hold thanks and praise, lamentation, repentance of sins individual and social, and call for God’s liberation from social injustices.

Gracious God, we thank you for making one human family of all the peoples of the earth.

Enrich our lives and show us your presence in our neighbors.

From the bondage of racism that denies the humanity of every human being and prejudices that deny the dignity of others, Lord set us free:

Lord, have mercy.

From ignorance and hardness of heart that keeps oppressors thoughtless to the destruction caused by racial injustice; Christ set us free:

Christ, have mercy.

Forgive those of us who have been silent and apathetic in the face of intolerance and bigotry overt and subtle, public and private. Lord set us free:

Lord, have mercy.

Take away the arrogance and hatred that infects all our hearts. Break down the walls that separate us.

Lead us to the unity that is the fruit of righteousness.

Empower us to speak boldly for justice and truth and equip us to work together with mutual forbearance and respect.

Transform us into your beloved community.

We acknowledge that we participate in structures of oppression, and yet we so often do nothing to remedy it. Lord, set us free:

And make us alive together with Christ.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, “Confession, Repentance, and Commitment to End Racism,” http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/WorshipResources__End_Racism_Sunday.pdf?_ga=1.173007139.1440960086.1431109040 (Accessed 15 September 2018).

Especially important in these prayers is the acknowledgement that racism denies the humanity of *all*, not just those who are oppressed because of their race. Also, vital, and reflecting the observations of bell hooks mentioned in the chapter on race theory and black theology, is the entire group's acknowledgement of our participation in structures of oppression.

In a moment of liturgical glitch (unfamiliar liturgy and unclear marginalia in the celebrant's bulletin) no absolution was offered after the prayers. From the professional, ministerial vantage point, it is an unnerving omission. However, from the ritual studies vantage point, it is a shift in the standard ritual format of the Eucharist that holds possibilities for the implications of the ritual in this community. The confessional aspects of the prayers include turning away from: the bondage of racism; ignorance and hardness of heart; silence and apathy; arrogance, hatred, and separation; and participation in structures of injustice. These prayers brought the story of Ed Johnson's lynching and the culture of white supremacy surrounding it into the present, connecting even the most mundane and un-self-aware forms of contemporary white supremacy to this atrocity, and claiming our own spiritual accountability for them. But in the complex situation of social/systemic and individual forms of these sins, there is an incompleteness of repentance in the continued complicity in the oppression of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. To leave the unease of silence after these prayers stretches the speech-act of penitence beyond the liturgy.

The Eucharistic prayer was selected particularly for these lines: "Living among us, Jesus loved us. He broke bread with outcasts and sinners, healed the sick, and proclaimed good news to the poor. He yearned to draw all the world to himself yet we

were heedless of his call to walk in love.”¹⁵¹ This vision of the kingdom of God proclaimed in the teaching and work of Jesus powerfully connects the Eucharist as a means of grace and embodied reminder of this call to walk in love, a sacramental expression of this larger vision with profound social and ethical implication for all those who claim faith and discipleship in Jesus Christ. However, the novelty of this prayer (seldom used in the St. Paul’s context) in the unusual context of the cemetery tour may have stripped some of the depth of the liturgy. Despite the powerful language of this particular prayer, its use signified a disconnect to the regular parish Eucharist, which would have been better accomplished through a more frequently used Rite II prayer. For future practice, the language of prayer A, most broadly familiar for this community, would offer a better coherence and clear connection of the political act of anamnesis.

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself, and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.¹⁵²

This language calls clearly on a theology of Easter faith, and it is this honest resurrection hope that calls and equips communities to the hard work of social change. In the context of explicitly considering the social impact of white supremacy in lynching, it also offers the assembly the language of imprisonment and the death-dealing nature of white supremacy.

¹⁵¹ The Episcopal Church, *Enriching Our Worship I: Morning and Evening Prayer, The Great Litany, The Holy Eucharist*, (New York: Church Publishing Incorporated, 1998) 61.

¹⁵² *The Book of Common Prayer*, 362.

This tour and Eucharist were powerful experiences of taking familiar ritual elements out of their typical context, uniting them with a different setting and narrative, and weaving the practice together in worship, spiritual formation, and social consciousness-raising. But in order for this Eucharist to, as Catherine Bell might put it, more fully ritualize and to contribute to transformation in the parish, the community would need to engage it with regular repetition and a greater collective mass. According to Grimes, this liturgical adaptation would prove itself the truly received Eucharist if, after time and repetition, it yielded a continually growing awareness among its participants of their relation to their social locations as individuals and as a predominantly (but not exclusively) white Episcopal parish. Repetition might also increase awareness of this particular liturgy's relation to the liturgical and formation activities engaged in the context of the church and more traditional practices, drawing the anti-racist anamnesis from the cemetery into the nave on Sunday morning. The assembled group that day represents a minority of the congregation which is actively concerned with and acting against structures of white supremacy in the city and the world. They are more inclined to possess an existing connective structure between this ritual experience and their social ethics. The existing social consciousness brought explicitly into relationship with the sacrament creates a dynamic and loosely bounded ritual of liturgical ethics, which might require greater preparation, explicit instruction within the liturgy through preaching and introduction, and para-liturgical educational practices.

Conclusion

The history of the United States of America and the history of Episcopal Church in the United States are entangled in the history of white supremacy and the flourishing of white persons at the expense and suffering of people of color, particularly African Americans. White supremacy is, fundamentally, the ideology and systems and structures that whiteness is superior, and the systems and structures that support and enact this conviction. White supremacy is so longstanding and pervasive our culture that it is naturalized, rendered invisible, to those who espouse and benefit from it. To be a people of love, faith, and integrity, members of this denomination must tell the truth of our histories, un-naturalize the assumptions of white power, and reckon with our responsibility for past and current social inequality and abuse in light of that truth.

In the Eucharistic Prayer A, the priest prays the second epiclesis on behalf of the assembly: “Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace.”¹⁵³ The gathered people of God are filled with the Holy Spirit alongside the elements to become the Mystical Body of Christ, and their faithfully receiving is indicated through unified, constant, and peaceful service to God and God’s kingdom. Many Episcopalians, week after week, are shaped by that text, and the core truth that our connection to God through the sacrament and the Holy Spirit’s presence in our lives is intimately connected to our connection to one another. The core ethical demand of Christian discipleship, following the first command to love the Lord our God, is to love our neighbors as ourselves. For white Christians, the work of resisting white supremacy and its effects in society is the work of loving our neighbors: loving our

¹⁵³ *The Book of Common Prayer*, 363.

neighbors of color in public and through history and loving our white neighbors enough to work toward consciousness raising and policy change. Those of us who have the privilege and call to lead in faith communities receive the responsibility to bring together these truths in our teaching, preaching, discussion, example, and liturgical leadership, and to challenge for growth and awareness.

In bringing together the liturgical and sacramental framework of the Episcopal Church with an account of our national racial history, the insights of black liberation theology and critical race theory, the impact of ritual and liturgy on social and spiritual formation, and political interpretations of the Eucharist, this project has demonstrated one paradigm for approaching the Eucharist in the Episcopal Church as a tool for resisting white supremacy. Not only does this sacramental practice offer a shift in approach to the work of Christian social ethics and racial justice, but also a shift in the experience of sacramental participants. Approaching the Eucharist from this paradigm of contextual anamnesis, recalling those who have suffered and been killed by white supremacy, offers a deeply meaningful and more richly incarnate understanding of presence of the broken body of Christ in the sacrament. It shapes the white worshipper's sense of connection between social issues and faith and galvanizes our reception of the sacrament and Spirit to do the work of battling white supremacy within and dismantle its evils in society.

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