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Racial Separation: The Cancer of Structural Racism Within Evangelicalism

A Thesis
presented to
the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts in Theological Studies

by
Keith Kei Sunahara
May 1995

Approved by Christine Pohl, Ph.D.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Author's Note

The writing of this thesis has been a somewhat disorienting experience for me. As a third-generation Japanese American I found myself identifying both with Evangelicals and with African American Christians. Japanese Americans have sometimes been called a "good" minority; we have assimilated ourselves into American culture (American culture being identified by Caucasian culture) and have quietly gone about pursuing and achieving the American Dream. We are considered good examples of how anybody, with enough determination and hard work, regardless of their race, can make it in America.

As a Japanese American Christian I feel quite at home within Evangelicalism since Evangelicalism reflects the American culture into which I have assimilated myself.

On the other hand I am often conscious of being a member of a different race from most of the people around me. I'm aware of how I feel so much more "at home" when I'm in a group of Asians than when I'm not. When I accidentally cut someone off did the other driver glare at me just because I cut him off, or because I cut him off and I'm one of those boat people who hasn't learned to drive yet? Although it is economically understandable, it's still regrettable that I have to go to a special grocery store to get the key ingredients for the meals I like to cook. Because I have some experience of what it means to racially different from the majority, I can to a limited extent, sympathize with the circumstances of African Americans.
I have chosen, throughout this thesis, to identify myself with Evangelicals. However, since my sympathies are also with African American Christians, I also identify with them. I see myself as a victim of the structural racism of which I am also a participant. I am in the strange position of feeling anger at what racism has done to people like myself, while also feeling anger at people like myself for being racists. The purpose of this note is not to focus on my anger but to preclude confusion over whom I identify with; I identify both with Evangelicals and with African American Christians. I also want to make clear that my motivation for writing this thesis is not anger at anyone in particular, but out of love for both Evangelicals and African Americans -- love for Evangelicals in that I want nothing more than for us to tear down the barrier of racism that separates us both from our neighbors of other races and from God; love for my African American brothers and sisters who are suffering under the grave social injustice of racial oppression.

Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of my thesis is to develop a Christian framework for understanding racism. I will then use this framework to examine Evangelicalism for the presence of racism. The purpose of this thesis is not to provide a plan for combating racism within Evangelicalism, but for providing the means for recognizing racism. This thesis is motivated by my personal concern that the racial structure of Evangelicalism is the result of the influence of our culture rather than the commitment of Evangelicals to be a community that incarnates the kingdom of God.

The new world order is one of ever growing racial and ethnic strife; this strife is evident in various parts of the world such as Bosnia, Rwanda, and the
Middle East. Such strife can also be seen in the increasing racial tensions and incidents within the United States as exemplified in the Rodney King riots, the debate over affirmative action, the Howard Beach beatings, various incidents on university campuses, and the debate over immigration policy. Conflicts between racial and ethnic minorities within the United States may likely increase as immigration and birthrates result in ethnic minorities becoming a greater percentage of the U.S. population and Caucasians becoming simply the largest minority. The "browning of America" is a phenomenon that has been described by numerous social commentators. Within this social context Evangelicalism is faced with a great opportunity for social justice and witness.

The problem of racism presents a special challenge to Evangelicalism because racism is not explicitly addressed in the Bible. The Bible does not define racism, explain what it looks like, or describe racist behaviours. Evangelicalism is thus at significant risk of simply accommodating itself to the prevailing understanding of race relations in American culture, rather than representing to American culture a Christian understanding of race relations. In actuality, this accommodation appears to have already taken place since Evangelicalism, as defined by my thesis, seems to have followed the same pattern of racial separation that exists within society at large.

**Statement of Problem**

What is the relationship between the racial separation within American Evangelicalism and a biblical understanding of social justice?
Discussion

It is assumed that significant racial separation exists within Evangelicalism. By this I mean that African American Christians whose doctrine is similar to Evangelicals, are not significantly present in Evangelical churches, parachurch organizations, and other institutions. Evangelicals themselves freely admit that racial separation that exists within Evangelicalism. Christianity Today describes 11:00am Sunday morning as the most segregated hour in America.\(^1\) Spencer Perkins Jr. and Chris Rice cite that only 5% of African American Christians belong to Caucasian denominations and fewer Caucasians belong to African American denominations.\(^2\)

The first subproblem that will be addressed is the concept of Christian Social Justice. The foundation of a clear biblical theology of Christian Social Justice must be established in order to examine the problem of racism from a biblical perspective. This theology of Christian Social Justice will include an explicit definition of Christian Social Justice that explains the relationship between love and social justice. This discussion will show how an understanding of human worth implies the recognition of human rights.

The next subproblem that will be addressed will be the development of a Christian definition of human rights. Human rights have been defined by different societies in different ways. However, my thesis will seek to develop an understanding of human rights primarily based upon the biblical text of Genesis.

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One of the human rights that issues from Genesis is that of full membership in society. My thesis will focus on how this human right relates to racism.

The next subproblem then relates racial separation to Christian Social Justice. A violation of human rights would be an act of social injustice. The question then becomes "is racial separation a violation of the human right of full membership in society?" The denial of full membership will be explored especially through the mechanism of structural racism. The racial separation within Evangelicalism will then be compared to structural racism as a means of determining if African American Christians are being denied membership in Evangelicalism.

The final subproblem to be addressed will be the implications to Evangelicalism of the presence of structural racism in the racial separation within Evangelicalism. Barriers to overcoming racial separation will be examined. The effects of remaining racially separated and of overcoming racial separation will also be discussed. Two major principles for combating these barriers to overcoming racial separation will also be briefly identified.

Review of Related Literature

Love & Conflict: A Covenant Model of Christian Ethics by Joseph Allen provides the foundation upon which I build my theology of Christian Social Justice. The concept of covenant is an absolutely essential context for understanding the social implications of God's love. God not only loves individuals and has a plan for them, he also loves society and has a plan for it. Biblical Ethics and Social Change by Stephen Mott describes how social justice, as an instrument of God's love towards society, serves to implement God's plan for society.
In examining the present state of the concern for social justice, Kevin Bean in *Renewal of Social Vision* asserts that the Christian Right represents an understanding of social justice that is simply an endorsement of the Evangelical subculture. Bean provides insight into the difference between a biblical understanding of social justice and what Evangelicals are presently trying to accomplish through government. The basis for much of Evangelicalism's concept of social justice is not so much rooted in theology but in the ideology of Individualism. *Individualism and "The American Dream"* by Yuri Zamoshkin provides insight into American Individualism. His insight provides a basis for understanding how Evangelicals have to a large extent lost a vision for social justice.

In *Righteousness and Justice* by Sidney Rooy the relationship between the concepts of righteousness and justice are examined. Our individualistic mindset has the tendency incorrectly to separate concepts when they should be understood as having almost equivalent meaning. The relationship between love and righteousness/justice when understood in the context of God's covenant is that love demands righteousness/justice.

Joseph Allen's insight into the covenantal aspect of God's love also forms the basis for the inclusiveness of God's love. This inclusive love provides the basis for the equal value of people which implies the need for a Christian understanding of human rights. In *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, Stephen Mott shows how human rights provide the criteria which social justice uses to guide its structuring of society. The concept of human rights is closely associated with the common brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity. In *Theological Foundations of Social Justice* by Chukwudum Okolo develops the concept that the foundation for social justice in the case of combating racial injustice is the common brotherhood and sisterhood of humanity. Especially in
the case of Christianity the common brotherhood and sisterhood is based on our having a common father/creator in God.

In understanding the concept of human rights, Human Rights: A Dialogue Between the First and Third Worlds by Robert and Alice Evans, On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics by Jürgen Moltmann, Human Rights and Human Dignity by John Montgomery provide excellent insight into three basic categories of human rights. These categories are based on their political climate of origin: first, second, and third world. Robert and Alice Evans argue for the necessity of a proper understanding of human rights in order to properly understand social justice. They support the idea that social justice is the protection of a person’s humanity through the protection of their human rights. Moltmann provides specificity by claiming that a Christian understanding of human rights should differ from the politically based ones. However, he asserts that the third world view is closest to a Christian understanding of human rights since both the third world and Christian views include the concept of social liberation. Montgomery then provides additional specificity by deriving human rights from Old Testament laws and New Testament moral teaching.

The discussion of how rights are claims upon society in Christianity and Social Justice by Nicholas Wolterstorff was particularly helpful in developing my understanding of human rights. Society is responsible to provide certain goods to people just because they are human. While I did not use Wolterstorff’s model of rights as claims to ownership, his model provided insight into the need to show that the claims upon society, as expressed in rights, must have a morally compelling foundation.

Theology and the Basis of Human Rights by John Henley helped to identify the foundation or bases for the claims of human rights. The moral force of human rights originates in their relationship to human dignity. This
relationship provides the basis for using human rights as the criteria by which Christian Social Justice protects the humanity of people. In *Theology and Human Rights* by Larry L. Greenfield the point is made that human rights also contribute to the right relationships between people. Greenfield helps to show that even human rights have to be understood in the context of a purpose. Humanity is partly expressed in people who relate rightly to each other. Thus, the protection of human rights should be accomplished with the goal of people rightly relating to each other.

My thesis has focused on membership as a human right which racial oppression violates. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* by Iris Young supplies two excellent categories for understanding how people can be excluded from equal membership in society. Young identifies and explains how people can be excluded from membership in society by marginalization and cultural imperialism. *Membership in the American Community as a Component of Identity* by James Sellers provides more insight into the dynamics of marginalization. Sellers identifies projection of invisibility and stereotyping as methods of marginalizing people. These mechanisms of structural racism are applicable to the way in which Evangelicalism has denied membership to African American Christians. *Black Evangelicalism: Theology, Politics, and Race* by William Turner Jr. shows how African Americans are rendered invisible by Caucasian Christians. *Masculinity and Racism-Breaking Out of the Illusion* by Daniel Krichbaum and *At the Door of the Church* by Catherine Meeks address the mechanism of cultural imperialism. Krichbaum asserts that the cultural values and economic goals of white males are implemented in society's institutions. Meeks provides insight into how an attitude of cultural superiority by Caucasians and the unwillingness of Caucasians to share power is incorporated into Evangelical institutions.
In exploring the causes of structural racism, William Turner Jr., in *Black Evangelicalism: Theology. Politics. and Race*, contributes the idea that the separation of African American Christians and Evangelicals is not based on doctrinal issues, but on political and cultural issues. Evangelicals have a politically conservative agenda that is based not on biblical values but on maintaining a socio-economic superiority. According to this view, if African Americans want to be accepted in Evangelical churches they need to take on the cultural trappings of Caucasians.

In understanding how racial oppression can be active in Evangelical churches, whose people are mostly people of good will, institutional racism is examined as the cause. *The Web of Institutional Racism* by Otis Turner helps to explain the concept of institutional racism. He defines what is meant by institution and hows how institutional racism can enable racism to exist without people being directly responsible. Kyle Haselden asserts in *Mandate for White Christians* that institutional racism exits in the church because there is a belief in the church that the message of Christianity is irrelevant to racial problems. Evangelicals have detached the practice of their faith from social problems. The exercise of Christianity is limited to personal habits and is thus not related to neighbor love and justice. Evangelicals falsely equate social justice issues with ideological disagreements.

What makes institutional racism acceptable to Evangelicals is our acculturation. *Religion. Racism. and Self-Image: The Significance of Beliefs* by Wayne Johnson supplies insight into the how churches have become acculturated and use the same categories for determining the in-group as does secular society. The in-group is defined by such things as race, culture, and social class. Christians who see the church as an instrument for meeting their own needs are especially susceptible to this mentality. What makes people
most comfortable is to be with people just like themselves. *Racism in the EFCA?* by Leroy Scheumann provides actual examples of how ethnic pastors in an Evangelical denomination have experienced institutional racism. It provides a discussion of methods for fighting this racism.

One of the keys to recognizing the presence of structural racism is to view reality from the eyes its victims. *The Coming Race Wars? A Cry for Reconciliation* by William Pannell is an excellent source for insight into how African Americans perceive racial relations with Caucasians. Pannell's insights provide key data in helping to identify barriers to racial reconciliation. The way in which Pannell views race relations highlights the importance of building personal relationships with people of other races as part of the racial reconciliation process. Without these relationships Caucasians will never understand what people of other races experience.

Insight into how Caucasians and African Americans interact through the mechanisms of structural racism is provided by Spencer Perkins Jr. and Chris Rice in *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of the Gospel*. This book reveals the dynamics behind why African American and Caucasian Christians are estranged from each other. It also helps to identify barriers to racial reconciliation. It is especially helpful in understanding why African Americans do not perceive Caucasian Christians to be very helpful in the area of racial reconciliation. More particular or specific actions that can be taken to remove structural racism are given in *Breaking Down Walls: A Model for Reconciliation in an Age of Strife* by Raleigh Washington and Glen Kehrein. This book identifies many practical steps to take towards racial reconciliation. The bases for these steps are rooted in the practical experience of the lives of the authors. The experiences of the authors are detailed in the first half of the
book. These practical steps also provide insight into the barriers to racial reconciliation.

Bibliography for Review of Related Literature


Theoretical Framework

It is assumed that within most of American Evangelicalism there are no widespread consciously or intentionally racist practices. It is also assumed that American Evangelicals generally accept that, although the Bible does not explicitly address racism, it provides the theological bases for teaching that racism is sin. The focus of my thesis then is not trying to prove that racism is
wrong, or providing corrective actions, but determining what constitutes racist practices and determining if such practices exist within Evangelicalism.

Definitions

For the purpose of my thesis I am limiting the definition of Evangelicals to a subset of Evangelicals that excludes such groups as Pentecostals and Wesleyans. Doctrinally, American Evangelicals are Christians who accept the authority of Scripture, emphasize a personal relationship with God, and believe in the imperative to be personally involved in evangelism. Evangelicals in this study are limited to those Christians that grew out of Fundamentalism in the 1940s and who meet the preceding doctrinal description. Evangelicals are those Christians who can be associated with the institutions of Evangelicalism as described in the following definition.

Evangelicalism is the loose association of institutions and organizations that represent the interests of Caucasian Evangelicals. William Pannell describes them as organizations headquartered primarily in Colorado Springs or Wheaton IL who tell the rest of Evangelicalism what they see and how to understand it. Evangelicalism also includes seminaries such as Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, Fuller Theological Seminary, and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Evangelicalism also includes musicians, recording companies, retreat centers, publishers, etc., who contribute to the Evangelical subculture. Personalities often associated with Evangelicalism include Billy Graham, Carl F. H. Henry, and Harold Ockenga. Mission agencies include Campus Crusade for Christ, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, and the Navigators.

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Prejudice is the association of moral, intellectual, and other non-physical characteristics with physical attributes. Racial prejudice is the association of moral, intellectual, and other non-physical characteristics with the physical attributes associated with race.

Racism is the treatment of people based on racial prejudice. In a sense it is the acting out of prejudice. Racial oppression is racism plus power; the incorporation of racism into the societal structure such that racism becomes a societal-wide practice.

Methodology

Research will focus on using the indexes currently available in the B. L. Fischer Library. For those references not available in the B. L. Fischer Library, interlibrary loan requests may be initiated for those sources evaluated as important enough for further study. It is anticipated that they will be able to provide the vast majority of references for this thesis. Research in the areas of social justice, human rights, and racism will utilize secondary sources. It is not within the scope of this thesis to independently develop theories for justice, rights, and the mechanics of racism. Existing models of justice, rights, and racism will be used for comparison of applicability to Evangelicalism.

Outline of Thesis

The first chapter is the introduction which specifies the problem that this thesis is addressing and establishes the boundaries and delimitations on the subject matter. The introduction also provides a review of literature and justification for the thesis.
The second chapter addresses Christian Social Justice. It starts by examining the need for a theology of Christian Social Justice and why Evangelicalism in general seems to ignore that need. The chapter then defines Christian Social Justice building on the foundation of Christian love and human value or worth.


The fourth chapter then examines the relationship between racial separation and Christian Social Justice. Racism as sin is first established. What it means to be denied the human right of equal membership in society is then explained. The concepts of structural sin and structural racism are developed. The way in which structural racism denies equal membership is described. Finally, the manner in which racial separation is a form of structural racism that denies equal membership of African Americans in Evangelicalism is identified. This identification demonstrates that the racial separation within Evangelicalism is a form of injustice and racism.

The last chapter looks at numerous barriers to overcoming the racial separation within Evangelicalism. The implications of remaining racially separated and overcoming racial separation are then described. Finally, two key principles in overcoming racial separation are briefly discussed.
Justification for Study

A very popular or high visibility issue within Evangelicalism today is racial reconciliation. Most Evangelicals seem to embrace the concept of racial reconciliation. We acknowledge the estrangement that exists between African American and Evangelicals and recognize that things need to change. However, it seems that while Evangelicals want to see themselves as part of the solution, they do not recognize themselves as part of the problem. Two very influential books about racial reconciliation, written by Evangelicals, are *Breaking Down Walls* and *More than Equals*. Both these books assume that once people see a need for racial reconciliation, they will see the need for eliminating racial separation at the institutional level. However, I believe that most Evangelicals interpret racial reconciliation merely at the individual level. Racial reconciliation is understood as having African American friends. Having racially separated churches and Christian institutions is not seen as necessarily bad as long as African Americans are not overtly excluded from them.

My thesis will attempt to show that Evangelicals can still be part of the problem of racism even if they do not harbor ill will towards African Americans. The racial separation between Evangelicals and African Americans is a result of structural racism incorporated into the institutions of Evangelicalism. In order to effect true racial reconciliation, Evangelicals not only need to see themselves as being part of the solution to racism, we also need to see that we have to stop being part of the problem. We need to work intentionally to eliminate racially separated Evangelical institutions.
CHAPTER 2
SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Need for Christian Social Justice in Addressing Race Relations

What is "social" justice and what makes it different from "regular" justice? Without giving a full definition, social justice is the category of justice that deals with the systemic causes of problems that impact society as a whole. Social problems include poverty, racism, welfare, crime, education, and health care. Social justice looks at how to affect these problems by changing the way in which society operates. An example of the difference between social justice and justice in an individual sense could be in how two people address the issue of slavery. A person operating from an individual justice mindset could say "slavery is wrong therefore I will not own any slaves." Someone operating from a social justice mindset would say "slavery is wrong and not only am I going to not own slaves, but I am also going to try to abolish the institution of slavery." Social justice is concerned about how people are being treated, not just with what am I doing. Even if I am not doing anything wrong, if people are being mistreated, then I am still responsible for doing something to help them.

Social justice is an absolutely essential concept for Christians to grasp because, without it, some forms of injustice will never be significantly corrected. The cause of social injustice is more than just some people of ill will taking advantage of, or being mean to, others. It is actually the system itself, within which society operates, that perpetuates injustice. By simply operating according to the existing social system, people of good will take advantage of others without even being aware of it or feeling responsible for it. Without an adequate understanding of social justice, the systemic causes of injustice in
society will never be recognized or acknowledged. Hence, such injustice will continue unchecked.

The Bible refers to the way in which society operates as the social order. Stephen Mott describes how the New Testament Greek word "cosmos", while translated as "world", often has the connotation of social order, i.e., the way in which society operates.¹ Not only does sin inhabit individuals, but it also inhabits the social order. Evil is the result not only of the individual choices of people, but it also arises from the influence of sin operating through the way in which society is ordered. Ephesians 2:1-2 provides an example in which an individual's sins follow the sin inherent in the social order of society.² "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."(NIV) (emphasis added) The battle against sin or evil then involves more than merely having individuals make better choices, but also includes changing the social order to eliminate or reduce the sin that is inherent in that system. Justice then has a social dimension.

Another aspect of the Christian faith that supports the social dimension of justice is God's covenant love. Joseph Allen describes how God covenants with a people, not merely with individuals one at a time.³ In covenanting with a people, God does not simply create new individuals, but a new social order or social existence for those people.⁴ Not only are individuals in need of redemption then, but so too is society in need of transformation. In the same

²Ibid., 5.
⁴Mott, 26.
way that we are called to participate in the redemption of individuals through evangelism, so too are we to participate in the transformation of our society by implementing justice in the institutions of our society. We will examine the fuller implications of God's act of covenancing later. However it is important to note that God's act of covenancing with a people, which establishes a new community, implies that part of God's redemptive activity is the transforming or reordering of society. Hence the Christian activity of establishing justice in the structure of society is both affirmed and called for.

Why should race relations be addressed as a social justice issue? The reason race relations is a social issue is that it deals with how groups of people fit in society. There is more to investigating race relations than merely understanding how an individual of one race relates to an individual of another. It is about how society is arranged and how it functions according to how races of people relate to each other. Because people of non-dominant races are seen as belonging to groups with common characteristics, they tend to be treated according to what group they belong to, not as unique persons. The way in which groups of people are treated by other groups of people is influenced by the "personality" of that society -- the cultural norms and values of whatever race or people group dominates the operation of that society. Race relations as an issue that is integrally related to the operation of society is thus a social issue.

Race relations is an issue of justice because we are concerned with how these groups of people are being treated within their society. Are they being treated fairly, is there basic equality, are they getting what they deserve, etc.? In a more general sense we are concerned with the question of whether they are being treated rightly; and if not, what does it mean to treat such groups of
people rightly. The right and wrong treatment of people is an issue of justice. Race relations is thus an issue of justice.

Why do we need Christian Social Justice to deal with race relations? Because secular methods of social justice are inadequate. Different theories have been put forth emphasizing different aspects of justice. For example, Rawls emphasizes fairness in the process of determining what is just, Nozick, the reward of abilities, Mill, the greatest good for the greatest number, and Marx, equality of distribution. These various secular attempts at articulating an ethical system upon which a just society can be based, rather than serving to transform human society into a just society, have merely heightened people's awareness of their rights which "seemingly have resulted in a more litigious society."  

Where secular theories fail is that they do not address the correct ontological status (the essential nature of what we are as human beings) and fundamental need of human beings. As Christians we recognize these two issues and use them as the foundation for our concept of social justice. Our ontological status is that we are loved by God. Our fundamental need is to love God and neighbor. These foundational presuppositions or assumptions, with their unifying theme of Christian love are radically different from those of secular theories. An understanding of social justice that is distinctly Christian is thus necessary because it alone acknowledges what we really are, and addresses our real needs.

To say that Christians should have a distinct understanding of social justice is not to suggest that we having nothing in common with secular theories. Once we have established the foundational premises and assumptions

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for our understanding of social justice, secular based theories can often provide valid insights into how the institutions of society function and how principles of justice can be implemented in the real world setting. Care must be taken when borrowing from secular theories to make sure that the basic Christian values of social justice are not being subverted.

What Happened to the Evangelicals?

Given the unique and vital contribution to social justice that Christianity offers, why do we Evangelicals seem to lack a theology of Christian Social Justice? Why do ethics and Christian Social Justice receive such little attention from the pulpits of Evangelical churches and classrooms of Evangelical seminaries? The answer to this question is highly relevant to our discussion. If race relations is an issue of social justice, and we Evangelicals lack a theology of social justice, then we have no motivation to place race relations on the Evangelical agenda of things about which we should be concerned. Even if we did get concerned about race relations, possibly due to a perceived risk to our physical or financial well-being, without a theology of Christian Social Justice, how would we know what to do or believe?

Evangelicals generally lack a significant theology of Christian Social Justice because of our embrace of the American emphasis on the individual. One aspect of the social vision of the New Christian Right is its emphasis on the individual.6 Such a social vision is representative of American religion as a whole and especially Evangelicalism; its social vision being heavily influenced by

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the ideology\textsuperscript{7} of American individualism. American individualism is an ideology in which the independence of the individual is the preeminent quality by which the success of a person's life is judged. We should therefore protect, affirm, and recognize each person's independence. "For many Americans, individualism is a kind of secular religion influencing the way they live more than the religious traditions some of them espouse."\textsuperscript{8}

Individualism affects our theology of Christian Social Justice by distorting our understanding of personal responsibility, the concept of society and its institutions, and holiness (living according to God's desires). Individualism's obsession with the independence of the individual results in confusing independence with isolation. According to individualism, as an independent individual I am isolated from society in the sense that I am completely not accountable for what other people do. I am only responsible and accountable for my actions and what my actions \textit{directly} result in. Such a privatized understanding of responsibility results in people who only feel responsible for circumstances for which they can recognize themselves as being the immediate and direct cause. For example, if a shoe manufacturer locates its plant in a Pacific rim country and pays the workers a bare subsistence salary for their labor, my decision to buy their shoes in no way involves me in being responsible for the exploitation of those workers. By its decision on what to pay the workers, the manufacturer becomes the direct, and only, cause of their exploitation. Hence, the manufacturer is completely responsible for exploiting its workers; all I did (and thus all I am responsible for) was buy an inexpensive pair of shoes. Since I am not the direct cause of the exploitation of the

\textsuperscript{7}Ideology: A system of ideas that supports a socio-economic and political system. (Author's definition)
workers, then I am in no way responsible for their exploitation even though I am supporting the manufacturer doing the exploitation.

By privatizing the concept of responsibility, individualism conflates responsibility and cause. To be responsible for something is to be the direct cause; and to be the direct cause is to be responsible. If I am not the direct cause then I am not responsible. Since social justice deals with problems that have no direct cause that can be traced back to individuals (e.g., I am not the direct cause of a whole class of people's poverty), then according to individualism I have no responsibility for social problems such as poverty. By not being responsible for social problems I am also not responsible for social justice. Individualism then makes social justice irrelevant or non-sensical.

Not only does individualism's emphasis on the independence of the individual provide justification for accepting responsibility only for those things over which we have direct control, it also gives us justification for accepting responsibility only for those things that directly affect us. The problems that occupy most of our attention are primarily those which seem to pose a direct threat to our independence. For example, even though an increasing number of Evangelicals are responding to the needs of the inner city, since most Evangelicals are middle class, many Evangelicals do not consider the problems of the inner city a high priority need. The inner city only becomes a concern for many Evangelicals when its problems directly impact our lives in forms such as crime or the busing of our school children.

Often our Evangelical response is not to do something about the inner city, but to contain the crime to the inner city by hiring more police and building more jails. The busing of school children is addressed by redistricting or transferring them to private Christian schools. As a last protective strategy we move farther away from the city into a different suburb to distance
ourselves from crime and busing. When social problems start to affect us, our first response is to take stronger steps to isolate ourselves from those problems. As long as social problems do not directly affect us we have no sense of responsibility for them. Our efforts to prevent social problems from entering our world, combined with our individualism, make it very difficult to have a concern for social justice.

American individualism, by its focus on the independence of the individual, influences people to view our economic system as a completely free market place. Personal success is based on our abilities and competitive spirit. The icons of American culture, the cowboy alone on the range, the frontiersman winning the west, and the self-made millionaire businessman exemplify the principle that success is related to having the abilities to be self-sufficient, the desire to make it on my own, and the willingness to pull myself up by my bootstraps. This view of society as independent people in competition results in the classification of people into three categories: winners, losers, and the insignificant.9 My placement within these categories is my responsibility. My inclusion in the loser category is due to character deficiencies on my part. A view of society that is shaped by individualism provides very little reason to be compassionate towards the people in the loser category. The losers are losers because they deserve to be.

Individualism's view of the economic system as a completely free market place is a very simplistic and deficient understanding of how people function in economic systems. It tends to ignore the complex network of people, circumstances, and institutions that influence and sometimes determine our position within the economic system. Who gets hired, promoted, admitted to

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degree programs, is awarded scholarships, receives loans, and countless other turning points in a person's life often depend on more than his or her individual qualifications. Access to opportunities often depend on the interaction of the cultural biases of the person doing the admitting, the policies and practices of institutions, government regulations, etc. This complex web of interdependent factors provides an environment for sin to manifest itself in a non-personal yet very active manner that makes our economic system far from a fair system where people really get what they deserve.

Individualism's emphasis on the individual has a tendency to view society's institutions as merely a collection of individuals trying to get ahead in a cooperative venture. The institution as an institution has no inherent power to influence lives. The power of the institution resides in the decisions of the individuals within the institution. Any attempts at influencing society should be directed at the individuals and the decisions they make; minimal consideration is given to reforming the institution itself. Individualism limits attempts to influence society to reforming individuals. This focus is antithetical to social justice which, while acknowledging the need to reform individuals also recognizes the need to reform the institutions that govern the operation of our society.

Individualism's stress on the independence of people from each other results in a very privatized form of Christian practice or holiness. Individualism views society as merely a collection of individuals pursuing their own ends; not as interdependent parts of a unified whole. Holiness then, does not apply to society as a whole. Holiness becomes merely another individual end to pursue. The focus of Christian holiness is primarily on our relationship with God and our

\[10\] Mount, 367.
moral and personal habits. A classic example of this attitude comes from an old editorial in Christianity Today:

What is the primary responsibility of the Church? To preach the Gospel of God's redemption and renewal of the individual through Jesus Christ, or to reform society? According to the Bible, the Church is basically and inescapably committed to the proclamation of the Gospel.  

The attitude exemplified in this editorial is still common today in much of Evangelicalism. Christian holiness is limited to such things as living a good moral life, prayer, Bible study, evangelism, and personal finances; things that either affect me personally or affect my relationship with another individual with whom I have direct contact. Broader issues such as poverty, racism, crime, health care, and education are not considered aspects of Christian holiness. "Our beliefs and our lifestyles are regarded as private matters which should have little or no relationship to the larger society. Moreover, Christian piety, or devotion to God, is essentially personalized and moralized." The extent that social issues are becoming less relevant to Christians can be seen in a poll in which although 62% polled said religion was increasing its influence on their life, 65% said religion was losing its influence on American life. Religion's influence is growing in the private aspects of our lives, while its influence on the more public aspects of our lives is decreasing.

If society is merely a collection of individuals pursuing their own ends, then the measure of holiness in a society is simply the sum total of the holiness of its members. The idea that society itself has its own measure of holiness is a meaningless concept to individualized Christianity. However, God certainly

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considers the holiness of a society. A holy society is one which lets "justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24, NIV). The holiness of society is closely associated with the degree to which justice characterizes its operation. Not only does God judge people for their personal sins, he also judges nations for the injustice of their social order. If society is to be just, its systems or way of doing things must also be just. Hence Christians ought to be involved in transforming the social order into a more just order.

Because individualized Christianity ignores the social order, the principal vehicle of interaction between Christianity and society is evangelism. Most interaction with society is deemed appropriate according to how it supports or implements evangelism. Since societal institutions, especially government, will not or cannot be tools of evangelism, they are ignored. Any improvements to society are accomplished by the conversions of individuals to Christianity and their subsequent improvement in morality, resulting in a subsequent improvement in the overall morality of society. Since the social order itself is usually not changed, then little overall impact is experienced by society.

Since individualism does not view society as an organic whole, government is viewed as an instrument of society that does not really do anything for society as a whole, but rather for society as a collection of individuals. Many Evangelicals understand government's purpose as protecting the security and freedoms of individuals. This view is a far cry from transforming the unjust order of our society. What little transformation of government that is being advocated in society is not being guided by the moral framework of Christian Social Justice, but by the ideology of individualism. Most of the Republican Contract with America seems to be directed at shaping

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Bean, 144.
government according to the presuppositions of individualism. Welfare spending, crime, and illegal immigration are viewed as threats to the freedom of individuals to enjoy the benefits of living in America. The social order as a source of these problems is not considered something the government should be involved in. Even the Evangelical emphasis on having government endorse traditional moral values, while an attempt to address social problems through government, still assumes that a large number of morally bad individuals are the exclusive source of social problems, not the social order itself.

**Christian Social Justice**

Given that the present Evangelical understanding of social justice is inadequate or incorrect, what is the proper understanding of Christian Social Justice? How can Evangelicals decide the proper positions to take on political-economic issues that are not explicitly addressed in the Bible? The starting point for the development of a sound theology of Christian Social Justice is God's covenant love. Covenant love does two things for us: 1) it forms the basis for our value as human beings and 2) it gives us a guide through moral dilemmas when we are faced with more than one morally right choice. Our value as human beings is expressed in the form of human rights which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Human rights are the instrument by which our value as human beings is recognized in society. The protection of human rights forms the basis for evaluating the degree of justice in our society.

As the starting point for a theology of Christian Social Justice, God's covenant love provides a Christian world view which calls for the existence of social justice. Joseph Allen defines covenant love as "God's constant
orientation toward humankind."\(^{15}\) Covenant love emphasizes God's establishment of a relationship with a people. Covenant love, while experienced personally, is more than merely a God-to-individual relationship. By establishing a new relationship with an entire people, covenant love actually brings about a new community or social order. God's act of establishing a covenant with a people changes the relationship between God and that people. This change in relationship requires the social order of that people to be different. Thus, in addition to redefining an individual's relationship to God, God's covenant love has implications for how the Christian community and society should function.

When the covenantal aspect of God's love is forgotten, the ideology of American individualism tends to bias the Evangelical perspective on concepts such as justification, righteousness, and justice. We understand those concepts primarily in terms of how they affect individuals. Righteousness and justice become distinctly different terms in which righteousness becomes a

"heavenly justice" (read righteousness) which receives God's gracious pardon for our personal sins, which makes us "brand-new persons inside," and which inspires us to be forgiving and kind to others.\(^{16}\)

Justice becomes an "earthly justice' to restrain crime and promote the external public order."\(^{17}\) In contrast, covenant love tends to emphasize the overlap between righteousness and justice. To be a righteous people is to have a social order which is just, and to be just is to be a righteous society. This overlap is evident in biblical passages such as those in Amos in which the nation is under God's judgement for the injustice of the social order which oppresses the poor. In the context of covenant love, the concepts of righteousness and

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\(^{15}\) Allen, 61.
\(^{17}\) Ibid.
justice have applicability to society. Not only should we be concerned about our status as forgiven sinners and the law and order of our society, we should also be concerned about the righteousness of our society and its degree of justice.

God's covenant love places a responsibility upon society to be just and on Christians to ensure that society fulfills its responsibility. Christian Social Justice is an instrument of God's covenant love that calls for the structuring of society in a way that protects the humanity of people. As an instrument of God's covenant love\(^\text{18}\), Christian Social Justice is the way in which God's covenant love is actualized on a societal scale, in contrast to an individual-to-individual scale. This definition also recognizes that God's covenant love is integrally related with what it means to be human; it provides the basis for what it means to be human. Our understanding of our humanity determines how we believe people should be treated by society and what it means to be a society of human beings.

Structuring society to protect the humanity of people means that society ought to treat people in a way that recognizes that they: 1) are recipients of God's covenant love and 2) have a telos (reason for existing) or purpose in life to love God and their neighbor. This concept of justice makes social justice more than merely ensuring that people are treated impartially or given what they merit (getting what we deserve based on our performance). Christian Social Justice requires that society actively seek the well-being of its members.\(^\text{19}\) To actively seek the well-being of its members means that the motives or intentions of the policies or programs which guide the operation of

\(^{18}\)Mott, 53.

our society are important and relevant considerations in the application of those policies or programs.\textsuperscript{20}

As Recipients of God's Covenant Love, People Have Equal Worth

Our status as recipients of God's covenant love implies that all people have equal worth or value.\textsuperscript{21} This value originates in God's love for people that bestows worth on people. Since God loves all people equally then all people have equal value.

The first step in showing that people have equal value is to show that all people are equally human. If some people were not quite as human as others, then we could question whether or not God loves the not-quite-as-human as much as the fully human. One aspect of our equality as humans originates in our common creator. The Genesis account of creation makes the clear theological statement that one god, our God, created all people. In this sense, no one can claim that some people are superior to others because they were created by a superior god. Job 31:13-15 states that regardless of social standing, people have a fundamental equality because of their common creator. "Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?" (Job 31:15, NIV).

As the sole creator of human beings, God did not create different classes or grades of human beings. Whether or not we accept the Genesis creation account literally, the theological truth that there is only one type of human being is contained in the image of Adam and Eve as the parents of humanity. Genesis also makes the theological statement that all humans are

\textsuperscript{20}ibid., 71.
\textsuperscript{21}Mott, 43.
made in the image of God. There is no evidence that some classes of humans are not made in the image of God or have only a "partial" image. All people equally share this fundamental defining quality of being made in the image of God. Job 34:19 states that God does not show partiality to people based on class because "they are all the work of his hands." If God created all people, and this common source of creation is the basis for impartial treatment, then a logical inference is that God created everyone equal. Otherwise having a common creator would not be a basis for impartial treatment. Proverbs 22:2 reemphasizes the idea of equality grounded in a common creator. "Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all." (NIV)

Given that all human beings are equally human because we were created equally human by the same creator, the next proposition to examine is that everyone is a recipient of God's covenant love. Even if everyone is equally human it may be the case that God decides to love some and not others. The proposition that everyone is a recipient of God's covenant love is based on the "New Covenant" described in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 describes the new manner is which humanity can relate to God. Because of God's forgiving action, people will be able to relate to God at a direct and personal level rather than one which is mediated through a structured priesthood and observance of ritual practices. This covenant is extended to all people; all of humanity is included in this covenant.22 The reason that all people are included in this covenant is that inclusion in this covenant is not dependent on human choice or decisions, but on the sovereign action of God in establishing the covenant. "The act whereby the inclusive covenant has come into existence is God's act of covenanting, an expression of

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22 Allen, 68.
God's intention in creation, decisively declared in Jesus Christ. All people are thus recipients of God's covenant love.

The inclusiveness of God's covenant love can be seen in God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ to all people and in the commandment to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19 NIV). This inclusiveness is echoed in Acts 17:24-26. In this passage Paul declares to the Athenians that God established the created order in such a way that "all men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." (NIV)

We should not make the mistake of limiting God's covenant love, in an inclusive sense, to the Christian community. Everyone is included in God's covenant that offers salvation to all and provides the means of salvation. However, although everyone is included in being offered salvation and having the means provided, not all accept the offer provided in this covenant. Christians are those people in whom the offer of salvation contained in the covenant has been fulfilled. Those people who have not accepted the offer of salvation do not stand outside this covenant, instead they have chosen to not receive the full benefits of the covenant. The idea that people outside God's "in-group" are still the recipients of God's covenant love can be seen in God's commands to show justice and love those outside the "in-group." Deuteronomy 10:18-19 commands the Hebrews to love the alien; other Old Testament passages command the Hebrews to show justice to the alien. Even those outside the Hebrew community should be loved because God loves them. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches that the question of who to love is a moot point;

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23 Ibid., 39.
24 Ibid., 40.
25 Ibid., 68.
26 Mott, 43.
Christians ought to love everyone. If Christians should love all people, surely the basis for such love is God's covenant love for all people, for Christians are to love as Jesus loves (John 15:12). Lastly, the inclusiveness of God's covenant love can also be seen in Matthew 5:43-48. The idea that perfect love includes love of our enemy demonstrates that our love for people should extend beyond the Christian community.27 If we are to love those outside the Christian community then surely those people are also the recipients of God's covenant love.

If all people are equally human, and all humans are included in God's covenant love, then it follows that all people are equally loved by God. This conclusion does not mean that all people are loved by God as equals. People are obviously different and have unique characteristics that distinguish them from others. Some people, even among Christians, have a more intimate relationship with God than others. To be equally loved by God in the context of this discussion is to assert that in terms of our fundamental humanity, we are equally loved as humans by God. The basis for God's command to love our enemies in Matthew 5:44 is "He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."(NIV) The linking of love to the impartiality of the sun and rain show that at a fundamental level, God distributes his love impartially to all people.

As recipients of God's covenant love we have value.

Because God has created us and entered into covenant with us, we must therefore be said to matter to God in a most serious way. ... In Christian theology human worth has its source in God's creating and covenanting action. ... From a Christian standpoint worth is a relational term.28

27 Ibid., 35.
28 Allen, 64.
When Jesus sends out the twelve, he encourages the disciples to not be afraid of people. Jesus explains that God will take of them because he values them.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31, NIV)

When God is the one who loves, value is bestowed upon the recipient of that love. God's covenant love for people thus bestows value upon people. Since all people are equally loved by God, then all people have equal value as human beings.

The fact that our value as human beings is a bestowed value has some significant implications. As a bestowed value its source is external to us. Our value as human beings depends not on our own characteristics or qualities, but simply on the fact that God loves us. Regardless of our IQ, race, religion, usefulness to society, age, physical abilities, etc., we have equal value as human beings. Since the source of our value is the eternal, ultimate authority and power in the universe, nothing can take away our value as human beings. The only way we would cease to have value as human beings is if God ceased to love us; and who would dare to make such a claim in the face of biblical evidence regarding the immutability of God's covenant love.

Our equal value as human beings, rooted in and bestowed upon us by God ought to be expressed in the societal setting. The means of such expression in society is the concept of human rights. The concept of human rights enable Christian Social Justice to recognize the equal value of human beings. A clear Christian understanding of human rights is so vital to my thesis that the next chapter will be devoted to understanding human rights from a Christian perspective.

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29 Mott, 47.
The Human Telos: To Love God and Neighbor

The protection of the humanity of people requires not only the recognition of the equal value of human beings (as seen in human rights), but also the recognition that people have a special telos (reason for existing) or purpose from God. Matthew 22:37-40 describes our purpose in life.

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."(NIV)

This command applies not just to all Christians but to all people. God's covenant extends to all people and these are the conditions for receiving the benefits of the covenant. These conditions therefore apply to all people. The purpose of humanity can then be summarized in the command to love God and neighbor. Our purpose has a number of implications with regards to the structuring of our society.

If humanity has the purpose to love God and neighbor, then it follows that society should be structured in a way that provides the means for achieving that purpose. Such structuring can be expressed in the form of human rights. A more thorough discussion of human rights occurs in the following chapter; however, the manner in which our purpose as humans relates to human rights will be discussed here. Since a person cannot be forced to love someone, even God, then the human right of freedom of religious practice needs to be incorporated into the structure of society. People ought to have the ability to freely love or reject God.
Another human right that is affected by our purpose in life to love God and neighbor is that of full membership in society. From a Christian perspective, loving God requires belonging to a community of faith, it is not merely an individual activity. Loving God requires loving our neighbor. We cannot love God without loving our neighbor and vice versa. To be excluded from society precludes loving our neighbor which is a violation of our purpose in life.

Our purpose of loving God and neighbor provides the context for protecting the rights of people. Given the complex nature of society and the demands that are placed on society for justice, often multiple human rights are in conflict with each other, or the same human rights are in conflict between different people. Knowing that the purpose for humanity is to love God and neighbor provides a basis for developing some means of resolving such conflict. When human rights conflict, society ought to respond in a way that does what is most loving for all its members.

Society should be structured such that to the maximum extent possible, people are treated lovingly. People often confuse the goal of Christian Social Justice with impartiality. Although impartial treatment in the sense of not allowing the influence of the powerful in society to result in favorable treatment for them is a facet of justice, impartiality is not the goal of Christian Social Justice. The goal of Christian Social Justice is the protection of the humanity of people. This goal can be restated as protecting everyone's equality of value as human beings. The goal of Christian Social Justice is thus a form of equality, not impartiality. In pursuit of this goal, the loving thing to do requires society to treat some people with partiality. The disadvantaged and powerless receive preferential or favorable treatment. The command to love our neighbor thus
compels society to give partial treatment to some people as a means of restoring or protecting their equality of value.

For the purpose of my thesis I will not develop the ethical implications of the human purpose of loving God and neighbor any further. Instead I will focus our attention on human rights and its relationship with racism. While our purpose in life will not be explicitly discussed any further, it is important to note that it does impact our human rights and our discussion of racism.
CHAPTER 3
HUMAN RIGHTS

The Need for Human Rights

Why do we, as Christians, need to have an understanding of human rights? Our society seems to have an obsession with rights: animal rights, environmental rights, the right to choose, black rights, women's rights, etc. With all the special interest groups and minority groups clamoring for their rights, do we really need Christians to add one more voice to the chorus of an American culture obsessed with rights? The Bible itself does not contain anything resembling a "bill of rights" nor does it contain an explicit statement defining the concept of human rights.\(^1\) Rather than demanding our rights, isn't it enough for us as Christians to recognize our responsibility to love our neighbor and live accordingly?

The acknowledgement or recognition of human rights is necessary for Christians because human rights are not merely the selfish demands of individuals. Rather, the honoring of human rights is a way of fulfilling our responsibility of loving our neighbor by ensuring that our neighbor is treated in a way commensurate with his or her value as a human being. Human rights are very consistent with the Great Commandment because they are an attempt to specify the basic elements of respect not just for oneself but also for others, to delineate those features of life and human relations without which all human beings are impoverished to the point of being so seriously degraded

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that it makes sense to speak of their condition as inhuman.\footnote{2}{John A. Henley, "Theology and the Basis of Human Rights," \textit{Scottish Journal of Theology} 39, no. 3 (1986): 369.} Even though talk of rights seem antithetical to the self-sacrifice demanded by Christian love, human rights are essential because they provide the bases for our own self-respect which then informs us on how to love our neighbor as ourself.\footnote{3}{Ibid., 370.}

The concept of human rights also provides a framework for understanding how the social order can dehumanize people. If the criteria for social justice is whether someone obeys or disobeys the Great Commandment to love his or her neighbor, then justice becomes a matter of an individual's decisions. Injustice is simply a matter of an individual deciding to be unjust. However, if human rights become the criteria for social justice then acts of injustice do not have to be directly linked to an individual's decisions. Someone's human rights can be violated without anyone being directly responsible. \footnote{4}{Nicholas Wolterstorff, "Christianity and Social Justice," \textit{Christian Scholar's Review} 16, no. 3 (March 1987): 214.} Human rights enable us to see how the social order can be the cause of injustice, instead of the ill will of individuals.

Whereas the idea that all people have equal value is a somewhat abstract concept, human rights provide a tangible and particular explanation of what it means to recognize the equal value of people. \footnote{5}{Henley, 365.} "Reference to particular human rights, then is at the same time reference to the specifics of human dignity." Human rights enable us to know when people are not being treated in keeping with their value as human beings in the context of our present day social setting.
Human rights are also necessary because of the moral force associated with the concept of a right. Only rights have the moral force necessary to effect changes in the social practices and arrangements such that the goods that people have a right to are readily accessible or available, or come their way. People should not have to depend on the charity or good will of those in power to receive what is rightfully theirs. Rights are not things that we give people as a favor, as an act of charity, or because they have earned it. Rights represent goods that society ought to provide to people simply because people ought to have those goods. Human rights enable people to make morally valid claims on society for goods that they ought to have just for being human. "Moral persons deprived of some good in a world without rights would either have to acquiesce in their deprivation or 'put out their hands and beg for the crumbs of some small reforms' in the hope that their begging would appeal to the conscience and the goodwill of those in power." Without recognizing a conception of human rights, those in power would have the option of allowing society to refuse to provide people what belongs to them as human beings.

The Relationship Between Human Rights and Christian Social Justice

As recipients of God's covenant love, all people have equal value as human beings. The connection between Christian Social Justice and the equal value of people is human rights. Human rights identify those goods that are necessary to support our existence as human beings. They identify those aspects of our humanity that society ought to provide for, or protect, in order to recognize or acknowledge our value as human beings. Human rights are not

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6 Wolterstorff, 212.
7 Ibid.
a mere human invention. Since the value of a human being is a bestowed value, then so too are the human rights which express that bestowed value in a societal setting. "For since human dignity is bestowed, based in God's love, the rights necessary concretely to protect and express that dignity are also bestowed."^8

Within the context of Christian Social Justice, the identification of human rights is an essential step in protecting the humanity of people. Structuring society in order to protect or defend the human rights of people is how Christian Social Justice protects and defends the humanity of people. "Justice has become defined as protecting and enhancing the condition of human dignity that is the foundation of human rights."^9 The protection of human rights ensures that the least powerful in society get what they deserve as human beings who are members of society. The desire to recognize the individuality of people in society should not overshadow the necessity to recognize the common humanity of all members of society. Human rights provides the minimum criteria by which people's inclusion in the human community established by God's covenant love can be recognized and protected.

The key concept that requires human rights to be a part of Christian Social Justice is structural sin or structural injustice. This concept will be fully developed later. However, the essential idea of structural sin is that the practices, arrangements, policies, and cultural norms of the institutions and associations that form the structure of our society, or social order, are themselves sometimes sinful or unjust. Structural sin has the ability to

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perpetuate injustice without the malicious intentional decision of any given person.

Since structural sin does not require the ill will of individuals to cause injustice, then we need a means of identifying injustice that does not rely on blaming individuals as the cause of injustice. Identifying human rights violations does not require the identification of individuals as the cause. We simply need to compare the status of society with our understanding of human rights and look for differences. Therefore human rights provides a means of identifying structural sin and the injustice it causes.

A biblically sound definition of human rights also provides the basis for an understanding of a just society that is independent of the views of the dominant group of that society. Typically, the dominant group in society stays dominant because society is structured in a way that supports its position. The natural tendency of the dominant group is to define the concept of a just society in terms that normalize the social structure that supports its status as the dominant group. Justice for the other groups in society becomes whatever accommodations to the social structure the dominant group allows that do not upset the status quo. Justice changes from doing what is right to doing what the dominant group allows. "Justice cannot be defined by the oppressor. When it is, it becomes a concession which is something less than justice. It is an appeal to the good will and conscience of the oppressor."\(^{10}\) Comparing society to a biblically sound definition of human rights forces the dominant group to consider that a just society may require a structure different from the existing status quo that it finds acceptable.

When the dominant group wants to make things better without changing the societal structure or themselves, the only thing left to change is the people

\(^{10}\) Wolterstorff, 211.
in the other groups. This approach is reflected in the reliance on individual conversions as the primary means to solve social problems. For example the way to get rid of racism is to convert people to Christianity so they won't be racists, or get rid of poverty by instilling a work ethic in poor people. The problem with this approach is that while there is always an element of individual guilt that can be assigned to individual people, a main source of such societal problems is the structural sin which supports the position of the dominant group. People in the dominant group are usually blind to the injustice of structural sin because they are the beneficiaries of it, hence they see nothing wrong with it. Also, the dominant group can often be people of good will and hence have no sense of personal responsibility or guilt for someone else's suffering. The people of the dominant group have no motivation to either acknowledge the existence of, or do anything about, structural sin when the appeal to change is based only on their good will and conscience. It takes the moral force of the violation of human rights in order to for the dominant group to recognize its participation in structural sin and injustice.

**Different Perspectives on Human Rights**

In the absence of an articulated biblical perspective of human rights, human rights becomes more of an ideology than a theology. Without a biblical basis, human rights, even for Christians, simply becomes part of the ideas that support the socio-economic and political system of the society we

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exist in. A number of writers: Robert and Alice Evans\textsuperscript{12}, Jürgen Moltmann\textsuperscript{13}, and John Montgomery\textsuperscript{14} identify three different perspectives of human rights based on the ideologies to which they belong. The following discussion of human rights borrows liberally from all four writers.

The first perspective on human rights is that of First World or capitalist nations. This view of human rights arises out of the eighteenth century French and American revolutions. Human rights are focused on an individual's civil and political rights; they are the rights of the individual over and against the state. The struggles of the North Atlantic nations against fascist dictatorships helped to emphasize individual human rights over and against the state and society. Human dignity is strongly associated with the capacity to operate in the free market system of a capitalistic society.

An understanding of human rights as an individual's civil and political rights results in an understanding of human rights as primarily negative rights. Human rights do not entitle a person to something, rather they simply act to prevent people from doing certain things. Positive rights say to someone "here, this is yours" whereas negative rights say "don't do that to someone else." A capitalist view of human rights is based on protecting the individual freedom of people. Human rights are negative rights in the sense that they are defenses of individual liberty. The defense of individual liberty is the key to protecting the dignity of people as defined by their capacity to participate in a free market society.

\textsuperscript{12}Robert A. Evans and Alice Frazer Evans, eds. \textit{Human Rights: A Dialogue Between the First and Third Worlds} (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1983).


The Second World or socialist nations' perspective of human rights comes from the socialist traditions of the nineteenth century. This view of human rights stresses the rights of people to participate equally in the social and economic benefits of belonging to society. This understanding of human rights arises out of the struggles in socialist states against capitalism and class rule.

Human rights in Second World nations are focused on protecting social equality -- people receiving equal treatment in society. Civil and political freedoms are promised, but only in conformity with the needs of society. The maintenance of social equality takes precedence over individual interests. Second World human rights assume that without the necessary economic and social conditions, it would be impossible for people to experience the personal, political, and civil rights that First World nations protect. These human rights are positive in the sense that they entitle people to receive something from society if they happen to be lacking it. The provision of positive human rights requires affirmative state action and hence a large and involved state government.

The Third World or Developing Nations' perspective on human rights arises from their struggle for independence from historical colonialism and use as the proxy combatants of the Cold War. Historically the Third World has been economically exploited by the cheap sale of its natural resources and labor in return for buying high priced weapons. These weapons were then used in a war of influence between the Superpowers which resulted in the destruction of the population, resources, and culture of the Third World nations. Human rights are understood as protection for human survival and for liberation from exploitation.
The Third World emphasizes the right to social, economic, and political self-determination. Much of the Third World's basis for their understanding of human rights is founded in a vision of the world as a global human village. Third World nations want to emphasize their solidarity with the rest of the world. They want full recognition as members of the world-wide human community.

The preceding discussion on three different perspectives of human rights demonstrates how much our understanding of human rights is informed by the sufferings and struggles of those advocating them. Human rights has become for most people just one element of their political ideology. Even the limited understanding of human rights of American Evangelicals seems to be more a reflection of Americanism rather than an expression of Christian Social Justice. Many Evangelicals seem to unconsciously recognize the connection between political ideology and our present understanding of human rights. However, rather than developing a theology of human rights that is independent of political ideology, we seem to ignore human rights as the method to prevent political ideology from corrupting our theological purity. However, if human rights are an essential building block of a theology of Christian Social Justice, then rather than ignoring human rights, we need to be at work constructing a biblically based understanding of human rights. Such an understanding of human rights can then be used in the development of a theology of Christian Social Justice.

A Christian Understanding of Human Rights

The first question to ask when defining human rights is "what is a right?" A right is more than a mere claim to some good. A right is a claim upon society to some good that is necessary to support something of fundamental
value. Another way of understanding a right is to view it as an entitlement. I am entitled to whatever goods support something that is of fundamental value.

Rights are indeed claims - entitlements to some good. But they are not necessarily claims against some definite persons that she, in some straightforward way, grant the claimant that good. It is better to think of a right to some good as a claim against society, to the effect that it shall be structured and arranged in such a way that one enjoy that good, with rights against individuals seen as a limiting case of this.\textsuperscript{15}

Since society is the one who responds to the claims, then society is the one who has the power to recognize or deny rights. This power to recognize or deny rights does not mean that society defines rights. Rights are based on fundamental values. Fundamental values are defined by sources such as religion and ideologies that transcend societal norms. Just because society does not recognize a claim as a right, does not mean that the claim ceases to be a right. That claim is a denied right. For example, a communist country may refuse to recognize the right of freedom of religious expression. This refusal does not mean that freedom of religious expression is no longer a right. It means that freedom of religious expression is a right that is being denied. Hence the claim can be made that the communist country is guilty of the injustice of denying a right to its people.

An implicit assumption in my definition of a right is that fundamental values are a concern of society. Fundamental values provide the ideological basis for the structure of society. Change the fundamental values of society and we are moved to change the structure of society. If fundamental values are essential to the structure of society then the honoring of fundamental values is necessary to the continued existence of the structure of society. Since rights are based on the fundamental values of society, then society has a

\textsuperscript{15}Wolterstorff, 214.
responsibility to honor those claims in order to maintain the structure of society. The point of this argument is that rights do not necessarily have to impose on a specific individual a duty to respond. The duty to respond can belong to society as a whole. For example, if society recognizes or defines adequate shelter from the elements as a fundamental value, a person can make a claim against society that society ought to provide the means for procuring, or actually supply, adequate housing him or her. No individual has to be identified as the person responsible for providing housing to the person in need.

One source of confusion in American society is the conflation of rights with wants or needs. Rights are neither wants or needs. Neither the wants or needs of individuals automatically represent the claim to some good as being necessary to support something of fundamental value. I can still claim something I want or need, but not with the moral force of a claim based on that good as being necessary to support something of fundamental value. In American society which generally views human rights as civil and political freedoms, it is very easy to assume that since no one can deny me the pursuit of a want or need, then no one can deny me from having it. If no one can deny me from having it, then I ought to have it. If I ought to have it then society must provide it. If society must provide it, then it's my right to have it. The flaw in this logic is that just because no one can deny me from having something, this does not mean I ought to have it. "Ought to have" is a claim based on a good's connection with a fundamental value; it cannot be used to prove fundamental value.

If rights are claims upon society to goods necessary to support something of fundamental value, then human rights are claims upon society to goods necessary to support the fundamental value of being human. "Human

^ ^ Montgomery, 66.
rights are claims any individual can place upon the community solely on the
grounds of being human.” 17 Human rights "amount to something like the
necessary conditions for human existence.” 18 My definition of human rights is
that human rights are the claims upon society to the goods that are necessary
to support the fundamental value of authentic human existence.

A key idea of my thesis is that if all people have equal value as human
beings, then all people have equal claim to those goods that are necessary to
support authentic human existence. If claim to a good is a human right, then
society ought to treat all claims with equal importance and provide that good
to all people. If that good involves a limited resource then some means of
distribution that recognizes the equal value of human beings (hence equal claim)
should be implemented. While receipt of the good may be denied based on
limited resources, the validity of the claim should not be denied. If someone is
denied his or her human rights, it does not mean they are no longer human. It
means that they are being denied, in some way, authentic human existence.

In Christian Social Justice, human rights function as "particular
statements of the demands of justice.” 19 They identify those goods that
society ought to provide to all people because all people have a legitimate claim
on those goods. They have a legitimate claim to those goods because they
are necessary to support an authentic human existence. The protection of
human rights is one of the key means of structuring society to protect the
humanity of people. The identification of human rights enables society to see
how injustice is more than a lot of people with ill will, but the failure of society

17 Stephen Charles Mott, "The Contribution of the Bible to Human Rights" in Human
Boston Theological Institute, 1985), 6.
18 Henley, 361.
to fulfill its obligations to provide the goods that rightfully ought to be provided to people.\textsuperscript{20}

\textit{...wicked men ...have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. (Jeremiah 5:26-28, NIV)}

The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern. (Proverbs 29:7, NIV)

Presently, Evangelicals, with the notable exception of the right to life for unborn children, seem to treat human rights as a non-issue. In discussions of political policies and social issues, human rights are not discussed either explicitly or implicitly. Evangelical interest in getting the government to do something about society seems to be limited to making abortion illegal, somehow affirming traditional individual moral values such as marital fidelity, sex within marriage, religious practice, law \& order, education, "clean" media, and getting poor people to develop a work ethic. By ignoring human rights, the institutional church, which includes Evangelicalism, is not merely neutral on human rights, but exerts a negative or inhibiting force on the genuine promotion of human rights.\textsuperscript{21} The church does so by its support of the status quo of the social structure which in turn supports the sin embedded in the existing social order.

As stated earlier the American ideology of individualism is not only embedded in American culture, but also in the theology of American Christianity. American Christianity, including Evangelicalism, seems to agree that political and civil liberties are what government and society ought to be concerned about. However, "There is in the Bible much more respect for the dignity of the people

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{21}Evans, 246.
than for the choice of the people."\textsuperscript{22} The emphasis in Evangelicalism on freedoms reflects not so much a biblical emphasis, but the western cultural "recognition of the supreme worth of the will."\textsuperscript{23} If willing or exercising choice is the defining quality of being human, then it naturally follows that individual freedom should be the ultimate value that is protected by society.

Nicholas Wolterstorff refers to the rights associated with civil and political freedoms as freedom-rights. Other rights which require society to provide some good to people are referred to as benefit-rights.\textsuperscript{24} As Americans, we tend to identify freedom-rights with human rights. In general we deny the existence of benefit-rights. Benefit-rights, by requiring people to provide goods to others, imposes duties on the providers of society, which invariably impinge on the freedom-rights of providers; hence benefit-rights seem very unAmerican.\textsuperscript{25} By denying the existence of benefit-rights, we, in keeping with the rest of America, tend to deny the existence of a vital category of human rights.

Evangelicals also deny human rights by their understanding of freedom-rights. A more careful analysis of an American understanding of freedom-rights actually shows that rather than being human rights, freedom-rights as understood by Americans are actually citizen rights.\textsuperscript{26} Many of the rights that are derived from the basic freedom-rights do not belong to all humans, but only to full citizens. People under eighteen years of age do not have many of the rights of the rest of Americans. Also since many of the rights derived from freedom-rights are associated with the freedom to choose, those who are

\textsuperscript{22}Mott, "The Contribution of the Bible to Human Rights,", 11.
\textsuperscript{23}Wolterstorff, 219.
\textsuperscript{24}ibid.
\textsuperscript{25}ibid.
\textsuperscript{26}ibid., 220.
unable to make choices (infants, those with mental impairments, comatose patients, etc.) are excluded from freedom-rights. Thus the American concept of human rights, as freedom-rights, are not really human rights since not all humans have them. Rather they are merely citizen rights. They are rights based not on our humanity, but rather on our capacity to make decisions. Loss of the capacity to make decisions results in loss of these rights.

The point of the preceding discussion is to show the state of affairs within Evangelicalism regarding a proper understanding of human rights. By denying the existence of benefit-rights, Evangelicals deny a significant portion of human rights. By mistaking citizen rights for freedom-rights, another significant portion of human rights is lost. Our vision of social justice is severely limited by our very limited understanding of human rights.

For Christians, genuine human rights originate not from our political or cultural ideology, but out of a biblical understanding of the equal value of human beings. "Human dignity . . . is more fundamental than any specific human right. It is the source of all moral principles, not a moral principle itself. Dignity is the norm by which the adequacy of all forms of human behavior . . . is to be judged." 27 "The dignity of the human being is not itself a human right but a source and ground for all human rights, and all human rights promote respect for the singular worth of human beings." 28 As the Bible is our source for understanding the value of human beings, so too it is our source for identifying those human rights necessary for Christian Social Justice to protect our humanity.

There are a number of approaches for identifying human rights in the Bible. Jürgen Moltmann sees human rights as particular expressions of what it

27 Evans, 247.
28 Moltmann, 9.
means for humanity to be created in the image of God. John Montgomery derives a list of human rights from the Old Testament Law and New Testament moral teachings. Although these two methods are valid and in the final analysis supportive of each other, I have chosen to work at a more basic level. Since human rights are particular expressions of the value of a human being, then human rights should be found implicitly in God's creation of human beings in Genesis.

The first human right identified from Genesis is the right to life support. Genesis 2:7 states "the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." (NIV) To be human means to have life. Life then is an aspect of authentic human existence. Hence society, to the best of its ability, ought to provide those goods necessary to support human life. When the capacity of someone's body to sustain life is diminished, then society has the responsibility to restore that capacity to the best of its ability. Medical care is a good that provides or restores the capacity of a human body to sustain life, hence it is a human right.

Closely related to the right to life support is the right to adequate means for physical survival. Genesis 1:29 states "Then God said 'I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food." (NIV) The implication here is that God has provided to humanity not just fruit and vegetables, but the use of the earth to provide the necessities for physical survival. Hence not only food, but also adequate shelter and clothing are elements of authentic human existence. They are elements of authentic human existence because God

29 Ibid., 23-29.
30 Montgomery, 161-188.
provided them. Society then has a responsibility to provide the means for people to have adequate food, shelter, and clothing.

The right to the means to procure adequate food, clothing, and shelter has support in other parts of Scripture. The redistribution of land and the redemption of slaves in the year of jubilee (Leviticus 25) as well as the cancelling of debts (Deuteronomy 15) which includes the admonitions that "there should be no poor among you" (Deut 15:4, NIV) supports the idea that society should not be structured so that people are denied the means to a minimal level of food, clothing, and shelter. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 with its affirmation of the worth of the human body also supports the idea that the basic physical or material needs of the human body ought to be provided for.

Genesis 1:26 and 28 identify another aspect of authentic human existence.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."(NIV)

God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."(NIV)

These verses are the classic verses that give humanity dominion over the earth. What these verses say is that God has entrusted the rest of creation to people. People have been granted a quasi-ownership or stewardship of creation. The implied purpose of this quasi-ownership of creation is to meet the needs of people in a way that respects God's ultimate ownership of creation. While people have quasi-ownership of creation to meet their needs, God has not given them any form of ownership over each other to meet their
needs. People have the responsibility to meet each other's needs, not as the property of someone else, but as partners in society.

The idea that people should not be the property of someone else to meet their needs is also implied in Genesis 1:27 which describes the creation of humanity in the image of God. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." (NIV) The meaning and implications of being created in the image of God have been the subject of theological debate for centuries. However, if God is the ultimate power and sustainer in the universe, then human beings reflect within the created order God's ultimate power by being ends and not means. People are never means in the sense that they should be used as tools to accomplish society's or someone else's ends. Human beings are ends in themselves.

The aspect of authentic human existence that recognizes people are ends, not the tools or property of someone else supports the human right of self-determination. People need the human right of self-determination to protect them from becoming the means to someone else's ends. This self-determination is not an unlimited freedom to do or to have whatever we want. Rather it is an acknowledgement that the only limitations that we face in life should be our God-given abilities and our life circumstances which are not the result of injustice.

Another aspect of authentic human existence is having meaningful work. Genesis 2:15 "The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." Work suggests the human right of having a meaningful vocation. Society should not be structured such that people are trapped or relegated into a position of dependency on society for survival. There is a certain dignity that is accrued to a person when he or she can, in a
limited sense, emulate God's creative power in the creation of some good which contributes to the created order.

The final human right suggested from Genesis is that described in Genesis 2:18 "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'" (NIV) Here we see that people are social beings, we are meant to exist in relationship. It is not good for us to be alone. An attribute of authentic human existence is to be in relationship with other people. To be in relationship with other people is not something that occurs merely at the individual level, but also at the community level. People exist in relation not only to other people as individuals but also to their society. The relational aspect of authentic human existence, especially being in relationship with society, requires the human right of equal membership in society.

The social character of God's covenant love reinforces the human right of equal membership. God's covenant love towards humanity does more than merely save the souls of those who "make decisions for Christ." God's covenant love creates a new people of God, a reordering of society in which people exist as a community in which all members relate to each other in peace and justice.\footnote{Mott, Biblical Ethics and Social Change, 62.} God's purpose for people is that they should be bound together in relationships of mutual dependency and accountability.\footnote{Bean, 149.} Leviticus 25:35-36 shows the importance that God places on persons being full members of society.

If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. (NIV)
The various Old Testament and New Testament commands for impartiality and fairness in the application of laws reflect this human right that all people have a fundamental equality as members of society. Equal or full membership in society is also emphasized in James 2:1-13 which commands us not to show favoritism to people based on social standing.

For the purpose of this thesis, only the human right of full membership will be addressed in the discussion of racism. While racism impacts many other human rights, full membership in society is the heart of the issue of racism.
CHAPTER 4
RACIAL SEPARATION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

How Racism is Sin

What's the point in explaining how racism is a sin? Not many Christians need convincing that racism is sin. It seems that most Christians agree that racism is a sin even though the Bible doesn't use the word "racism" or explicitly say "thou shalt not be a racist." The reason that we need to understand how racism is sin is not so that we can be convinced that racism is a sin, but so that we can recognize racism. While most Evangelicals readily agree that racism is sin, few seem willing to accept that the way we "do church" right now is a form of racism.

The first step in understanding racism is to understand racial prejudice. Prejudice is the association of moral, intellectual, and other non-physical characteristics with a person's physical characteristics.\(^1\) There are many different kinds of prejudice -- all of which involve "pre-judging" in which we associate non-physical characteristics with a person's physical characteristics. Not all prejudice is bad and in fact we operate on a daily basis with a multitude of appropriate prejudices. When someone in a police uniform approaches us we pre-judge that person to have certain qualities associated with police officers. If we are in need of a certain type of help that police are supposed to provide, we then feel it appropriate to ask the police officer for help that we may not ask of other people. Thus many prejudices are appropriate because they help guide our interactions with people.

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In the case of racial prejudice we associate moral, intellectual, and other non-physical characteristics with a person's racial characteristics. Racial characteristics are those physical features that place someone in a grouping of people with similar physical features. This type of grouping is different from grouping people by their ethnic or cultural backgrounds because people can change their personal lifestyles and habits to conform to a different culture and hence change their ethnic or cultural identity. However, in most cases a person cannot change the physical characteristics that define his or her inclusion in a racial group. Whereas a person can take on the cultural or ethnic norm of their society and so achieve inclusion in society on a cultural basis, he or she can never change their race and gain inclusion in a society if his or her race is excluded from that society.

Racial prejudice is sin because its prejudging is based on the denial of the way in which God created humanity. God did not create people absolutely equal in the sense of everyone being the same. Everyone does not have the same skills, talents, giftedness, personalities, etc. However, God did not create people in such a way that moral, intellectual, and other non-physical attributes are distributed according to race such that some races are superior to others. God distributes moral, intellectual, and other non-physical attributes according to his will, not according to race.

Racism is the treatment of people based on racial prejudice. In a sense it is the acting out of prejudice. This definition implies that people can have racial prejudices and not be racists. For example, my prejudices may influence the way I feel towards African Americans, yet I can consciously prevent those feelings from affecting the way I publicly interact with African Americans. This distinction is analogous to the difference between lust and adultery. While both
lust and adultery are equally sin, I can lust without committing adultery and not be subject to the disciplinary actions associated with adultery.

This definition of racism differs from a somewhat popular definition of racism which states that racism is prejudice plus power. On such a view, only those with power can be truly racists or commit acts of racism. African Americans and other such groups cannot, by definition, be racists because they are powerless. I disagree with this definition of racism because it makes racism strictly a Caucasian problem since they are the ones with the power. Limiting the problem of racism to Caucasians implies that nobody else needs to take any corrective action. At this point I do not want to get into a study of assigning blame for racism. However I do want to leave open the possibility for non-Caucasians like myself accepting some responsibility for racism and thus the possibility of repentance and change.

The relation of power to racism is expressed in the definition of racial oppression. While anyone can be a racist, only those with power can be racial oppressors. In other words racism plus power equals racial oppression. Oppression is not something that happens to people on an individual basis, rather it happens to people as they are part of a group of people. To oppress groups of people requires the ability to control the structures of society. Only those people with power can control the structures of society. Hence racial oppression requires the element of power. Minorities do not have power; although they can be racists, they usually cannot be oppressors. Only the dominant group in society can be oppressors. If racial oppression is a problem in society, then only the group with power, the dominant group has the resources to change society’s structure and combat racial oppression.

There are two broad categories of racism -- individual and structural. Individual racism is what most of us think of when we hear the word racism:
cross burnings, people in white sheets and hoods, people yelling racial slurs, etc. These are the acts of individuals to whom responsibility for actions can be assigned. This thesis will deal with the other type of racism, structural racism. Structural racism is a form of racism in which the structures of society are the cause of people remaining subject to racism. Since affecting the structures of society requires power, then structural racism is a type of racial oppression. From this point I will refer to racism as racial oppression. Structural racism will be discussed in more detail later.

Racial oppression is sin because it is a form of social injustice, and social injustice is a dimension of sin. Racial oppression violates the human rights of certain groups of people. Racial prejudice tells us that certain groups of people have certain moral, intellectual, and non-physical characteristics. A seldom recognized assumption that implicitly undergirds racism is the assumption that our receipt of human rights is contingent upon having certain moral, intellectual, and non-physical characteristics. This assumption is actually a denial of the existence of human rights. In this thinking, human rights are not rights at all, rather they are privileges granted to people on the basis of having certain moral, intellectual, and non-physical characteristics. Only those who deserve to have, or qualify for, those privileges ought to receive them. Racial prejudice automatically disqualifies entire people groups by assigning to them a non-qualifying grade of moral, intellectual, and non-physical characteristics. Racial oppression implements or enforces that disqualification. By denying the existence of human rights as rights, racial oppression also denies the common humanity of people. If there is nothing that belongs to people just for being human, then people as humans have nothing in common and the idea that everyone is equally human is meaningless.
My thesis will focus on one of the human rights that racial oppression denies; equal membership in society. Racism separates people into groups based on their racial features. Certain people are then denied equal membership in society (by the dominant group) because the moral, intellectual, and non-physical characteristics attributed to everyone in that group provides the basis for disqualifying them from equal membership.

**Denial of Equal Membership**

In discussing what it means to be denied equal membership in society, I must acknowledge that there is significant overlap between the ways in which this human right and other human rights are denied. We can almost say that to be denied the human right of equal membership in society is to be denied some or all of our other human rights. However this logic would simply lead to the circular explanation that to be denied human rights means to be denied equal membership and to be denied equal membership is to be denied human rights. For the sake of clarity I will not address the denial of other human rights as a way of denying the human rights of equal membership in society even where it would seem obvious.

Iris Marion Young identifies five forms of oppression. In discussing the ways in which denial of equal membership is manifested, I will use two of her categories: marginalization and cultural imperialism.² In my discussion of membership I will refer to those people groups who are excluded from full membership in society as the out-group.

To be marginalized is to be assigned to a people group whose members are considered to have nothing to contribute to society or who do the menial labor that no one else wants to do. To be marginal is to exist on the periphery of society in the sense that one has very little participation in the benefits of being part of that society. The reason that marginal people receive so few of the benefits of society is because the dominant group does not deem them worthy of receiving such benefits. Out-groups are not worthy because they are either useless or expendable. Useless people are outside the labor force, those who are dependent on society for subsistence and thus, rather than contributing something to society, are perceived as a drain on society. The expendable people are unskilled laborers (such as migrant harvesters, domestics, etc.) who can be so readily replaced that they are perceived more as self-propelled equipment than human beings. While the functions that these expendable people fulfill are vital to the smooth functioning of society, the people themselves who do the jobs are actually considered useless in the sense that if they do not do the job, there are plenty of other out-group people who will do it ("there's more where they came from").

To be marginalized is also to be denied the ability to make or contribute to decisions that affect one's life. This absence of participation in decision-making is accomplished by being denied access to the positions in society in which decisions that affect society as a whole are made. Since the out-group does not receive the benefits of being a full member of society, it lacks the power and money to affect decision-making at the societal level. Therefore the out-group has to accept whatever the dominant group decides for society. From the perspective of the out-group, most everything is done to them, not by them.
People in the out-group can also be denied full membership in society by cultural imperialism. With cultural imperialism the dominant group defines its culture as the cultural norm for the entire society. All other people groups who have different cultures are considered as inferior because their culture is inferior. Cultural imperialism excludes people from fully participating in society and in the benefits of society in two ways. The needs of people in the out-group that derive from their culture are not acknowledged to exist or are relegated to minimal importance to society and hence they are seldom addressed. Also the out-group themselves are stamped with the same sense of inferiority that is given to their culture and thus they are not deemed worthy to receive the same benefits that the dominant group receives.

Structural Sin

Structural racism is a type of racial oppression that operates through structural sin. Structural sin is a biblical concept. It refers to the order of society. Romans 12:2 refers to structural sin as the pattern of the world: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." (NIV) As stated earlier in my thesis the Greek word for cosmos that we translate as "world" refers to the societal order. 1 Corinthians refers to the wisdom of the world. Ephesians 6:12 says "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (NIV) Passages such as these illustrate that sin is more than merely the disobedience of an individual person. Sin is also a characteristic of the existing social order. There is a pervasiveness of sin that is a part of our social order that actually exerts an influence on people. This sin that exists outside of people, which influences
people to sin and that shapes the functioning of our society, is what is called structural sin. It is sin that works through the structures of our society.

The structures of society are the practices, arrangements, policies, and cultural norms of the institutions and associations that determine how our society functions. They "... function to meet basic human needs, social functions, or desires, real or perceived, such as hospitals, schools, fraternities, churches, and charities." How economies operate, what the norms of culture are, our understanding of cause and effect, the government, almost all the aspects of our lives are governed or influenced by the various institutions and associations that comprise our society. The manner in which these institutions and associations operate are themselves regulated by policies and practices which embody the cultural norms and values of those people that developed them. As these institutions and associations embody the cultural norms and values of the people that developed them, they also embody the sin of their cultural norms and values.

Institutions do not spontaneously spring from needs, functional requirements, or desires, however; they have to be constructed and maintained by intentional human actions. In other words, somebody or some group must affirm perceived needs and desires as being good and worthy of pursuit. Values are composites of what is affirmed as good, and institutions are mechanisms through which we incarnate and perpetuate values.

Society's institutions and associations in turn influence the people that operate within them, and the larger society in which they operate. Thus these institutions and associations perpetuate or spread the sinful aspects of society's cultural norms and values. The institutions and associations both reflect and support the "ways of the world" or "worldly wisdom."

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4Ibid.
We have difficulty in recognizing the evil of structural sin because we are not individually responsible for structural sin. We are personally responsible in the sense that we participate in it, we allow it to continue, and we reap the benefits of it. However, we are not individually responsible in the sense that it was our individual decisions that could be described as sinful. For example it is not an inherently sinful decision for me to hire someone to work for my company part time, with no benefits, at minimum wage. However the economic structure of our nation may be such that for many people such jobs are the only ones accessible to people who are trying to support their families (in contrast to wanting a little extra cash). In that circumstance I may be participating in an economic structure that exploits and dehumanizes people. The existence of our economic structure is not the result of any single person or organized coalition of people who intended to exploit and dehumanize people. Rather it is the result of the cumulative effects of the countless choices and decisions of individuals (following their wills) interacting in infinitely complex ways to create a system which is itself sinful in that it often fosters, nurtures, and breeds the exploitation and dehumanizing of people. I am not individually responsible in the sense that I am making decisions motivated by greed or that I am intending harm to others. But, I am personally responsible in the sense that I am working with or in a sinful system rather than trying to restructure it. Our American ideology of individualism makes us aware only of being responsible for individual sin, but blinds us to personal responsibility for structural sin. "Individualism has erected a glass wall between ourselves and the social system. Individualism stresses freedom of choice. We determine our value by our choices. We ignore the effect of the social system on our range of choices, our ability to choose, and the moral value of our choices."^5

^5Walter Wink, "How I Have Been Snagged by the Seat of My Pants While Reading the
How Structural Racism Denies Equal Membership

Structural racism is the treatment of people through societal structures, according to the moral, intellectual, and other non-physical characteristics that we associate with a people group's racial characteristics. It is "an ideology that permeates our value system and defines the norms that undergird the structures of our society." Structural racism "exists when one group views its cultural values, life styles, and socioeconomic self-interests as superior to those of other groups and then (overtly or covertly) implements these assumptions through societal norms and institutions." It is often associated with white middle-class males who operate social structures according to their cultural values. Structural racism denies equal membership in society on the basis of racial prejudice through marginalization and cultural imperialism.

Two ways in which structural racism marginalizes the out-group are projection of invisibility and stereotyping. James Sellers describes Projection of Invisibility (PI) in the following way:

The dominant group: 1) takes charge of myth interpretation, 2) believes theirs is the only game in town, 3) has remarkable capacity for "make believe"; has to procure, proclaim, and guarantee myths that bracket out the atypical, 4) subject of PI has to acquiesce to the bracketing of his or her identity.

What Sellers is saying is that the presentation of real life by the structures of media -- commercials, printed advertising, entertainment, and news reporting

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6Turner, 14.
8ibid.
offers a portrayal of reality which excludes the out-group. Other institutions then reinforce this perception of invisibility in their recruiting, hiring, or admitting practices. If reality as portrayed by the media says that the out-group does not belong in certain facets of life, then the practices of the institutions of society ensure that the out-group stays out of those institutions.

Stereotyping is somewhat the opposite of Projection of Invisibility. Stereotyping draws attention to the presence of the out-group within society. This drawing of attention is done in a way that exaggerates the difference between the dominant group and the out-group.\textsuperscript{10} Exaggerating the differences is done in such a way as to arouse a sense of fear or perception of the out-group as a threat to the well being of society. For example the out-group can be portrayed as a source of crime or source of welfare recipients. This fear provides motivation or pressure to exclude the out-group from participating in the mainstream of society.

Projection of Invisibility and stereotyping marginalizes the out-group by contributing to the perception of the out-group as being useless or expendable. To made invisible is to also be considered useless to society. People who have no role in the significant aspects of society are not really any use to society. Such people are merely dependents on society or fulfill the menial tasks that no one else wants to do. To be perceived as a threat to society encourages the perception of the out-group as expendable. The out-group is only allowed to do those tasks in society in which they can be easily replaced if they become too much of a threat or if a new out-group can be used which is less of a threat.

Projection of Invisibility (PI) and stereotyping also marginalize the out-group by excluding them from positions of influence in society. PI and

\textsuperscript{10}ibid., 174.
stereotyping shape the expectations of the people in the dominant group who do the hiring or control the admission or acceptance policies of our institutions. The hiring or acceptance practices reflect the belief that members of the out-group do not belong in certain positions in institutions, especially positions of power and influence.

Structural racism works through cultural imperialism to exclude other races from full membership in society. It is another form of stereotyping which rather than presenting the out-group as a threat, presents them as inferior. Since the out-group's culture is inferior to the dominant group's (which is assumed to be the norm), the people of that culture are also viewed as inferior. The presence of this stereotyping "can be seen in hiring practices that reflect a de facto caste system." The cultural norms of the dominant group become part of the criteria for admitting people into the institutions and associations that form the structure of society. When the cultural norms of the dominant group are incorporated into the structure of society they serve to stamp all other people who do not conform to those norms as inferior and hence they can be excluded.

A motivating factor behind cultural imperialism is the desire of the dominant group to affirm its place in society. Cultural imperialism makes the affirmation of the dominant group's position in society a zero-sum game. The dominant group's identity is affirmed at the expense of the out-group's. For example, in the antebellum days since no white man had to consider himself less than a slave, slaves could always be used to build up a white man's sense of well-being. There was always someone lower than the lowest white man.

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12 Sellers, 177.
Structural racism also contributes to the powerlessness of the out-group by excluding them from positions in the institutions and associations of society's structure in which they could have some influence over their own circumstances. Powerlessness is a derivative of marginalization. The institutions and associations of our society are operated in such a way that only certain people make decisions which affect the circumstances of their lives. When the out-group is denied access to such positions, or meaningful input into the decisions people in those positions make, and the decisions are based on the cultural values of the dominant group, then structural racism has occurred to render the out-group powerless.

**How Racial Separation Between Evangelicalism and African American Christians is an Element of the Denial of Equal Membership and is Thus a Form of Structural Racism**

Given that Evangelicals agree that racism is sin, why are Evangelicals separated from African American Christians of similar doctrinal beliefs? If we Evangelicals have truly recognized and repented of the sin of racism, why are African American Christians not identifying with Evangelicalism and becoming a part of Evangelical institutions and churches? The answer is that structural racism is still a part of Evangelicalism.

African American Evangelicals have been marginalized through the projection of invisibility. Technically, Evangelicalism is defined by a few simple doctrinal beliefs. However, Evangelicals often do not see African Americans Christians who share the same doctrinal beliefs as Evangelicals. Many theologically conservative African American Christians reject the political
conservatism of Evangelicals. African American Christians are not seen as Evangelicals simply because their political views and social concerns are different from Evangelicals, or because their churches come out of a different historical heritage. African American Christians have also been portrayed as merely part of the "black protest movement." Thus African American Christians, as Christians who share the same doctrines as Evangelicals, are considered to not exist or are considered to not really be Evangelicals.

African American Christians who share the theological doctrines of Evangelicals took the only action available to those who were marginalized within Evangelicalism. In 1963 African American Christians formed the National Black Evangelical Association (NBAE). The executive director of the NBAE, Aaron Hamlin stated "There are still needs that are not being addressed by the white evangelical community, in relation to jobs, poverty programs, and the racism that still exists." The needs of marginal people are of low priority compared to the concerns of the dominant group.

Kay Cole James, executive vice-president of the Family Research Council (an Evangelical organization) experienced first hand what it means to be a marginal person in the sense of being expendable. She became involved in a women's Bible study that met at a Caucasian church. When she asked why she and her husband were not invited to the annual trip to Myrtle Beach, James was told that the other women felt that James and her husband would feel uncomfortable in an environment with so few blacks. Kay Cole James was not a full member of her Christian community. There was no compelling motivation

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16 Bray, 23.
to change their plans so that she could be included because as a marginal person she was expendable.

African American Evangelicals are also the victims of the stereotyping that contributes to their marginalization. An example of the use of stereotyping by Evangelicals was a pro-life commercial that I have seen on television. This commercial showed very young children in adult occupations with the implication that this is what these children will grow up to be. The occupations seemed to fit into stereotypical categories. The African American children were a baseball player and fire fighter, the Asian children were a cook in a Chinese restaurant and a cardiac surgeon (a positive stereotype), the Caucasian boy was an attorney or CEO, and the Caucasian girl was suburban homemaker painting in her spacious kitchen. This stereotyping shows that African Americans make good athletes and blue collar workers, Asians are cooks in oriental restaurants or are good in math and science, and Caucasians occupy the power positions in society and live in the suburbs. Unfortunately we Evangelicals are still in the habit of thinking of minorities in terms of their stereotypical identities.

Since the days of the Social Gospel, Evangelicals have often suspected that Christians who have a concern for social justice are theologically liberal. African American Christians have a strong concern for social justice because of their history of being victims of racial oppression. Evangelicals stereotype African American Christians as theological liberals. African American Christians are then viewed as a threat to the theological purity of Evangelicalism and hence they are excellent candidates for marginalization. Much of the theological focus of Evangelicalism has been related to the defense of the inerrancy of Scripture, but African American Christians did not share this concern because they had never stopped believing in the authority of Scripture. The social
concerns of African American Christians are also seen as a threat to the mission of Evangelicalism. The mission of Evangelicalism is to spread the gospel, not get bogged down in social causes.

African American Christians are also the victims of cultural imperialism. In the sense that America belongs to those of European descent, to fully participate in American culture means to take on the cultural trappings of Caucasian Europeans. Similarly for the church, full participation in Evangelicalism requires African American Evangelicals to give up their distinctives. Expressions of African spirituality are looked upon as inferior. This cultural imperialism is seen in the attitudes of Caucasian Evangelicals who accept African American Christians in their church, provided the African Americans do not expect the Caucasian church to change anything. In other words African Americans are accepted into the Caucasian church only on the Caucasian's terms. ... conflict over agendas ... continues to be one of the reasons that blacks and whites do not come together to worship. The church of the whites continues to support the ideology of white superiority over blacks. Black culture is perceived as having nothing to contribute, hence rather than accepting black culture into the white church, white churches only accept blacks who have similar worldviews and lifestyles. In this view, if African American Christians want to use their forms of worship, expression, and culture, then they ought to do it in their own church. Often the claim by Evangelicals that they are "color blind" really means that they will accept African Americans if they are culturally

18 Turner, 54.
Caucasian, i.e., on Caucasian terms. Accepting African Americans as equals, including their culture, is a totally different matter.²⁰

An example of cultural imperialism appeared in the weekly newsletter of the largest Evangelical Caucasian megachurch in my city. The youth group was advertising a retreat for the purpose of unwinding from the stress of high school life. Part of the "attention getter" for their advertisement was a picture with the caption which read something like "Bad hair day got you stressed out? Come join us and learn how to relax." The picture was of an African woman with clothing and hair style which to me looked pretty normal for an African tribal culture setting. However, since the woman's hair did not match the Caucasian suburban cultural norm of the people who wrote the ad, it was a good example of "bad hair." I could only hope that there were no African Americans on that church's mailing list.

The structural racism of Evangelicalism is denying African American Christians full membership in the Evangelical community. The racial separation of African American Christians from Evangelicals is evidence that the pattern of racial oppression in society at large has been reproduced within Evangelicalism. While this situation appears disheartening, it is also important to remember that Evangelicalism is a movement comprised of sincere Christians of good will.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR EVANGELICALISM

Overcoming Racial Separation as Part of Racial Reconciliation

One of the big issues within Evangelicalism today is racial reconciliation. The Rodney King riots provided a wake-up call not only to society, but also to Evangelicalism. Evangelicals with whom I talk to sincerely desire to see racial reconciliation occur and to be a part of it. However, there does seem to be some ambiguity in people's minds over what racial reconciliation actually involves. In conversations with Evangelicals of my denomination and seminary, I do not perceive a concern over the existence of the racial separation between Evangelicals and African American Christians.

If full membership in society is a human right, then Evangelicals ought to honor that right in the context of the Christian community. All Christians, regardless of race, as long as they are doctrinally sound, ought to have full membership in their faith community. Evangelicals have a responsibility to accept African American Christians of like doctrine as full members of Evangelicalism. The oneness of the Christian community is not merely a spiritual concept but a social reality; our unity should be reflected in our institutions.

The racial separation between Evangelicals and African American Christians is inextricably bound up with the structural racism that exists in Evangelicalism. Racial separation exists because African American Christians have been denied full membership in Evangelicalism through marginalization and cultural imperialism. However, racial separation also makes possible or facilitates the process of marginalization and cultural imperialism. Racial
separation is both a result of, and a contributing factor to, structural racism within Evangelicalism.

Authentic oneness or unity within Evangelicalism can only be accomplished if the elimination of racial separation is included in our understanding of racial reconciliation. It is inconceivable how we can claim that we are united with our African American brothers and sisters, that they have full membership within Evangelicalism, and that structural racism no longer exists, if racial separation continues between Evangelicals and African American Christians.

**Barriers to Overcoming Racial Separation within Evangelicalism**

If the racial separation between Evangelicals and African American Christians is to be removed, a number of barriers will have to be overcome. These barriers are not necessarily specific to the racial separation within Evangelicalism, but may also be valid for racism in general. Many of these barriers overlap and are closely interdependent on each other. My presentation of these barriers is somewhat arbitrary and is not meant to be definitive; it is only meant to foster understanding. The barriers to overcoming racial separation are power, economic self-interest, political agenda, mistrust, comfort, and theological blindness.

The unwillingness of African American Christians to join Evangelical churches has less to do with different worship styles and more to do with their unwillingness to be treated as children and our unwillingness to share power.¹ Most Evangelicals seem to assume that racial reconciliation means African American Christians joining our churches with the presupposition that

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¹Catherine Meeks, "At the Door of the Church," *Sojourners* 16, no. 10 (November 1987): 27.
Caucasians will remain in the majority and that the majority of the leadership will remain Caucasian. Very few Caucasians seem comfortable with joining an African American church or being involved in a church in which they are the minority and in which the majority of the leadership, including the senior pastor, is African American.

Not sharing power or being in control is a big issue for Caucasians because being in power, or being the beneficiary of power is an assumed right or possession. It is often a given that in an organization that is supposed to represent everybody, the Caucasians will be in charge. The only time minorities are running something is if it is a ministry strictly for them. A typical example of this situation is my denomination, the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA). As a denomination, we endorsed a powerful statement on racism in 1992 and reaffirmed it in 1994. Yet an ethnic pastor in the EFCA stated, "The only way a black pastor can serve a church in our denomination is to start a black inner-city church . . . We're never given consideration for senior pastor or associate pastor positions in existing congregations." Another ethnic pastor described his frustration with the "glass ceiling" within the denomination's organizational structure. African Americans are not really accepted within Evangelicalism as full members, but only as ministry equipment with a limited range of function. The reason for including African American Christians within Evangelicalism is so that they can reach out or minister to other African Americans.

Another barrier to overcoming the racial separation within Evangelicalism is the different mentalities of Evangelicals and African American Christians.

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3Leroy C. Scheumann, "Racism in the EFCA?", The Evangelical Beacon, January 1995, 12.
Evangelicalism "has become essentially suburban in character." African American Christians are much more urban. Since African American Christians do not participate in much of the subculture of their Caucasian suburban counterparts, Evangelicals do not recognize African American Christians as having much in common with Evangelicalism.

The suburban character of Evangelicalism contributes to a difference in political concerns between Evangelicals and African American Christians. As the American Dream seems to be fading for middle-class Americans, Evangelicals seem, by our voting, to support the political party that best defends the suburban way of life. In essence what we are saying is that Evangelicals need both Jesus and a middle-class life to make it, African Americans just need Jesus. We are willing to use the political system to defend the concerns of suburbia, where many of us live, but are not willing to do the same for the city, where many of our African American brothers and sisters live. Such a stark contrast in political concerns makes it virtually impossible for African American Christians to feel a part of Evangelicalism.

Even Evangelicalism's emphasis on moral values appears to betray a subtle bias towards a defense of suburban living. Family values are emphasized not only out of concern for the families in poverty, but because welfare is becoming too big of a financial drain on the Evangelicals of the suburbs. Law and order help not only the people who live in urban areas, but also maintain the safety of the suburbs from the violence of the cities. But what about the moral decline among Evangelicals? Morals of an economic nature are seldom addressed by Evangelicals. Values that discourage greed and encourage modest lifestyles, generosity, and sacrificial charity are seldom

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4 Pannell, 113.
5 Ibid., 29.
6 Ibid., 61.
promoted. Consumerism, materialism, and the American Dream are too much a part of Evangelicalism for us to be critical of it. Such a biased view of the type of moral renewal needed within our country establishes an atmosphere in which African American Christians become the adversaries of Evangelicals.

Another barrier to overcoming racial separation is the mistrust that has built up between African American Christians and Evangelicals. "This is the true center of the pain. . . . The fundamental problem is that white people who own the system did not allow our absence to bother them."\(^7\) African American Christians do not believe that Evangelicals really care about African Americans. The Evangelical's choice of the comfort of their own race over brotherhood with African American Christians has bred an atmosphere of mistrust in which the motives of Evangelicals are questioned by African American Christians.\(^8\)

The barrier of mistrust leads to another barrier to overcoming racial separation. This barrier is the acceptance of comfort as a goal for Evangelicalism. We have developed a somewhat self-centered understanding of Christianity. Christianity exists for our comfort. Therefore our spiritual lives and church ought to be structured around assuring our comfort. Overcoming racial separation and structural racism involves changing power structures which is highly discomforting to those for whom the status quo provides a significant measure of comfort. It also invariably involves a great deal of conflict. Racial separation enables people to avoid conflict. People who do not want to resolve conflict can go their separate ways saying "you're OK and I'm

\(^7\)Ibid., 127.

OK, you do it your way and I’ll do it mine.9 “Being comfortable and homogeneous is one of Satan’s weapons against racial reconciliation.”10

Finally the last barrier to overcoming racial separation is for Evangelicals to see that there is a problem with racial separation. One reason that we have difficulty seeing a problem with the racial separation within Evangelicalism is our acceptance of the ideology of American individualism. I have already discussed how American individualism affects our understanding of social justice. I will now discuss two specific and relevant ways in which individualism affects our theology in the areas of love and spirituality.

Individualism places such a high premium on personal choice that Evangelical theology becomes fixated on an individual making a choice for Jesus. All other aspects of theology are built around supporting the individual choice of a person placing their trust for salvation in the atoning death of Jesus Christ. The command to make disciples becomes the central focus of the Christian life rather than The Great Commandment to love God and neighbor. Loving our neighbor becomes a tool of evangelism rather than evangelism being an expression of love. We shower people with Christian love so that we can witness to them and so that our testimony has credibility. Ministry that is not directly associated with evangelism and disciple-making is seen as something that is not “what we’re about” as Christians. Rather than being about loving God and neighbor, we are about making disciples. Social justice, since it is not directly associated with the evangelization of an individual becomes something that we are not about.

Our understanding of justice has to do with God’s condemnation of the sins of individuals. Because of my sin, God provided Jesus as my savior in

\[\text{Ibid., 174.}\]
whom I place my trust in for eternal life. Justice is something that I need to be saved from. The concept of justice as the protection of human rights (social justice) is incoherent in an individualistic framework. Social justice, then, is not identified as a component of God’s justice or as a theological concept that should shape our lives and communities.

Individualism’s focus on the individual also has a tendency to make spirituality the exclusive domain of the heart. Spirituality is exclusively defined by the attitudes and inclinations of our hearts. “Blessed are the poor” (Luke’s version) is usually understood as those poor in spirit, i.e., who acknowledge their spiritual need. Humility is only a spiritual humility not a lifestyle issue. Brotherhood/sisterhood and equality are a spiritual brotherhood/sisterhood and equality, but not a relational brotherhood/sisterhood and equality. We Evangelicals often grant spiritual equality or brotherhood to African Americans, but do not see social equality as an issue of Christian faith.11

It is also difficult for us to see a problem with the racial separation within Evangelicalism because to admit that it is a problem would strike at the heart of our national identity as American Christians. As American Christians we often view America as a nation specially blessed by God. This blessing is associated with the Christian heritage of the Caucasians who built this country. This special blessing is not a part of the heritage of the African American slaves, Native American Indians, Chinese immigrants, Mexican Roman Catholics, or any other non-Caucasian people that occupied a place in the history of the building of our country. In this view, America has prospered into the only remaining superpower because God has blessed us because of the Christian heritage of the Caucasians who built the social structure of our nation. To

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admit that racial separation is a problem is also to admit the existence of structural racism, which is to admit the existence of racism as an element of our development as a nation. It is a lot nicer to believe that our success as a nation is a result of divine approval, rather than the result of certain geographic and natural resource advantages that enabled us use the same tactics to build our empire (racism, colonialism, etc.) better than anybody else.

An Opportunity for Evangelicals

The presence of structural racism within Evangelicalism indicates that our understanding of the kingdom of God has been tainted with a theology that incorporates the ideology of American individualism and the cultural superiority of Caucasians. Catherine Meeks proposes that this cultural superiority is a carry-over from the slavery days of viewing African Americans as subhuman which justified the owning of slaves by Christians. Society has a tendency to redefine what is immoral into what is moral. Homosexuality, divorce, premarital sex, and the separation of the races are presented to our society as things that should not be considered immoral. Robert Suggs, academic vice-president at Grand Rapids Baptist College, recalls how when he was the pastor of an urban black church, white pastors would refer to his church, black families that visited their churches. These white pastors did not hate blacks, but had the "best interests" of the black families in mind. The white pastors assumed that the black families had come to their church by accident or would not be comfortable in their church. These well intentioned white pastors had accepted as morally acceptable, or as normal, the separation of races.

12 Meeks, 27.
13 Haselden, 50.
As Evangelicals, our obedience to the Great Commandment of loving our neighbor is called into question. Much of the structural racism within Evangelicalism can be linked to the acculturation of our churches. Our response to "who is my neighbor?" is based on the same secular categories as the rest of society. Our understanding of who fits into my in-group is determined by the same categories (race, culture, social class, vocation, etc.) used in defining the social structure of society. Rather than redefining our concept of neighbor by biblical values, we simply import society's values into our churches.

An extremely significant implication for Evangelicals is that our participation in structural racism denies our very identity as Christians. Love is the distinguishing feature of Christians. John 13:35 states "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."(NIV) The incorporation of structural racism into our churches as seen in our racial separation speaks volumes about our inability to love one another across racial lines. Our inability to love across racial lines denies the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and churches. It is no wonder that Evangelicalism lacks credibility in the eyes of the secular world. Our claim to have a special power to love in a special way, is refuted by the reality of our ability to love only those who are just like us. "Christianity doesn't require any power when it only challenges us to do what already comes naturally." In this sense we are no different from the non-Christian world.

However, the racial separation within Evangelicalism provides a monumental opportunity for Evangelicals to demonstrate the credibility of Christianity to the world. Of all the miracles, healings, speaking in tongues, and prophecies that demonic forces can counterfeit, genuine love is the one work of

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16Perkins, 62.
the Holy Spirit that can not be falsely duplicated. If Evangelicals can effect true racial reconciliation, including the elimination of racial separation, it will have something that the rest of the world can only wonder at, especially in this time of growing racial and ethnic violence. While the rest of the world may deny the truthfulness of the gospel, they would not be able to deny the reality of the power of Christian love.

Suggestions for Overcoming Structural Racism

The purpose of my thesis was not to lay out a comprehensive approach to overcoming structural racism within Evangelicalism. My purpose was to provide a framework for understanding structural racism and identifying the racial separation within Evangelicalism as an element of structural racism. Works such as More than Equals\textsuperscript{17} and Breaking Down Walls\textsuperscript{18} are excellent resources for getting started on the road to racial reconciliation. However, these books seem to assume that if the reader recognizes the need for racial reconciliation, he or she will also recognize the need for eliminating racial separation. I believe that assumption needs to be substantiated in minds of many Evangelicals. This thesis has demonstrated that racial reconciliation needs to include the concept of restructuring our churches and organizations in order to do away with the existing racial separation. Heterogeneous churches and institutions should be the norm for Evangelicalism, homogenous churches and institutions the rare exception.

There are two actions that are essential to overcoming structural racism within Evangelicalism. One action is for Evangelical and African American

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid., 1-244.

\textsuperscript{18}Washington, 1-241.
Christians to form true friendships with each other. Only through personal relationships will Evangelicals learn to accept African American Christians as both spiritual and social equals, and African American Christians be able to develop trust towards Caucasians. These personal relationships will enable Evangelicals to recognize how we participate in structural racism's marginalization (projection of invisibility, stereotyping) and cultural imperialism. We can then work to change policies, practices, attitudes, and arrangements in our institutions and associations to purge structural racism.

Attacking structural racism requires direct involvement from the leadership. Structural change requires the power to change policies and practices of institutions and associations. That power resides in the leadership of denominations, churches, and parachurch organizations. The current way of "doing church" within Evangelicalism is unacceptable if structural racism is to be overcome. Worship formats may need revision. Leadership patterns will have to change. Caucasians will have to accept being in a church in which an African American is senior pastor. The hardest thing that Evangelicalism will have to overcome is the resistance to the change of the status quo. Evangelicals have a very real investment in the status quo because it supports our comfort. African American Christians also have a real investment in the status quo because the African American church is one area of their lives in which they are not under the power of Caucasians. Both groups will have to give up much comfort in the battle to overcome structural racism.

The transformation of Evangelicalism from a suburban Caucasian movement will require a great deal of work, conflict, change, and discomfort. Why should we do it? On one level it is an act of obedience to bring our segment of the church into conformity with a biblical vision for the kingdom of God. However, on a personal level there will be an immense blessing of joy in
experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit enabling us to love of people who are different from us. Our lives will be deeply enriched by the sharing of spiritual experience, perspectives, and insights from Christians who understand the world and God from a different perspective than we do.

Are there Evangelicals who value the benefits of racial reconciliation enough to make the sacrifices it requires? There are encouraging signs that leaders within Evangelicalism are beginning to do just that. In a January 1995 meeting of leaders from the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the National Black Association of Evangelicals (NBAE), Don Argue, the executive director of the NAE said that he would be willing to step down if the NAE and NBAE decided to merge.19 The NAE has decided to include more ethnically diverse people in its leadership and announced a complete reorganization.20 A Christian men's movement called Promise Keepers, with many ties to Evangelical organizations list reconciliation, including racial reconciliation, as one of its promises. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a large Evangelical parachurch missions organization is making racial reconciliation a priority within its ministry. These activities are very promising examples of a growing movement within Evangelicalism towards racial reconciliation. However, Evangelicals in general still need to be convinced that racial reconciliation includes the breaking down of structural racism.


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