RACIALIZED CULTURAL SYSTEMS, SOCIAL DISPLACEMENT, AND CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

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PROLOGUE

In early days of the city of Williamsburg, Virginia, affordable housing and vocational opportunities were hard to come by, especially for people of color, and this is still the case today. Such constraints in turn gave rise to "social displacement," feelings of abandonment, despair, and out-of-placeness that come together in a loss of social and cultural identity. In this respect Williamsburg may not be much different from other cities and towns in the southern United States, but owing to its being one of the oldest US settlements, it offers a compelling case study that demonstrates that issues of race and religion have formed our nation's political unconscious by serving as the organizing principles of politics, economics, and civic life. The result is a system of government that regards God as the civil ruler (a theopolitical framework) that inevitably formed categories of separation and belonging that further displaced people, especially people of color.

A theological and historical account of the origins of racism in the United States reveals that racism, with all its twists and turns, finds its beginning in ethnoreligious exceptionalism—that is, the belief that one's ethnicity and religion is superior to that of others. It came primarily in the form of white superiority and anti-Semitism, stemming from the centuries-old conflict between imperial Christianity—the commingling of the Church and Empire resulting in coercive practices of power in order to make the whole

world Christian—and the Jewish faith, a conflict that dark-skinned people, namely Africans, would feel the brunt of.[1]

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[1] J. Kameron Carter says, "Race is the discourse to constitute whiteness in relationship to a non-Jewish alien without and a Jewish alien within the body politic." J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81.

CHAPTER 1
A BRIEF THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF RACE

Irenaeus (c. 125-200 CE), bishop of Lyons, entered into the fray of a great intellectual debate concerning humanity's material existence and identity. It was a debate created by the speculative theories of the Gnostics and helped form Irenaeus' theological understanding of Christ's personhood, work, and ministry. It also forced him to center his understanding of material existence in his understanding of Christ, that is to say, in the idea that Christ assumed a literal material body rather than a "psychic body" (what the Gnostics promoted) to redeem humanity and the whole cosmos.[2] As strange as this may sound to us it was a real issue for the early Christians. Irenaeus' made the point that if any aspect of the relationship between creation, Israel, and Christ is lost, theology as a way of understanding humanity and the cosmos that promotes life will become twisted into a Gnostic-like understanding that promotes

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[2] Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," II, 30, 9, *The Anti-Nicene Fathers*, 1:406; See Carter, 11.

death.[3] Such a distortion—favoring the death of material existence and a nonmaterial disembodied ghost-like Christ to a material embodied Christ in a *Jewish body* situated in the history of Israel—is dangerous in that it makes Christian theology susceptible to being used as a justification to devalue human bodies based upon the belief that some human bodies are more important than another based upon ethnicity or skin color.[4] To put it another way, if Jesus as God took on a literal body of a minority people displaced and disinherited by other empires, then all who call him Christ and Lord will never be able to theologically justify a devaluation of any minority peoples based on ethnicity, skin color, or social standing.

　　According to George M. Fredrickson, Irenaeus and his theologically similar counterparts were initially successful in creating buffers against the development of an anthropological hierarchy among Christians.[5] Eventually, however, ethnoreligious superiority began to creep in, a prejudice nowhere more obvious than in the treatment of

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[3] See Carter, 34.

[4] Carter puts it this way, "Lacking all of this, in the hands of the Gnostics, theology as a discourse lacked internal buffers against the protoracial development of an anthropological hierarchy of essences that could function inside Christian theology itself," or ethnic prejudice and superiority grounded in theological belief." 35.

[5] George. M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 17.

the Jewish people from antiquity into the middle ages.[6] Over time, Christians increasingly came to view Jews as being responsible for killing the Christ, thereby creating a compelling reason for persecution of the Jewish people. Despite the best efforts of theologians like Saint Augustine of Hippo, a Roman African, to promote the conversion of the Jews as essential to the salvation of the world, anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism grew, ultimately making expulsion and genocide preferable to conversion.

Massacres of Jews began at the time of the First Crusade in 1096 and ethnoreligious superiority was behind it. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, European Christians became increasingly hostile in ways that laid a foundation for the theopolitical framework of institutional ethnoreligious superiority that would eventually develop. By the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, these Christians had effectively dehumanized and demonized the Jews, deceptively portraying them as engaging in ritualistic killings of Christian children and as being inherently evil due to their deliberate unbelief in the divinity of Christ.[7] Similarly, in the mid-fourteenth century, European Christians wrongly blamed deaths caused by the great plagues on the Jews, claiming that the Jews poisoned the wells. As this belief spread, Jews were massacred by the

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[6] In his article, "Proto-Racism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity" (*World Archaeology* 38, no. 1 [2006]: 32-47), Benjamin Isaac argues that Greek and Roman intellectual development shows traces of prototypes of racism..

[7] Ibid., 20. The Scripture most often used as support was Christ's condemnation of the Jews who rejected him: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires" (John 8:44 CSB).

thousands in countries where they had not yet been expelled.

By the late Middle Ages, ethnoreligious superiority as an ideology had extended to other ethnic peoples. The ongoing dehumanization and demonization of the Jews in part likely fueled the dominant attitude toward indigenous populations assumed by those colonizing the periphery of the European continent and beyond. As historian Robert Bartlett writes, "On all the newly settled, conquered or converted peripheries, one can find the subjugation of native populations to legal disabilities, the attempt to enforce residential segregation, with natives expelled into the 'Irishtowns' of colonial Ireland, and the attempt to proscribe certain cultural forms of native society. Ghettoization and racial discrimination marked the later centuries of the Middle Ages."[8] Whether or not the prevailing powers of the day justified their ethnoreligious superiority using a theopolitical ideology is up for debate. What is certain, however, is that medieval Europe was increasingly intolerant of Jews, the disabled, and anyone who refused to conform to the religious and moral majority.

By the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, sub-Saharan Africans began to be subjected to the same intolerance Jews and indigenous populations in Europe had

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[8] Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 239-40. Intermarriage between Germans and Slavs were banned. Laws were passed making German descent a requirement for holding political office or belonging to a guild. In Anglo-Irish cities it was much of the same, with the Irish receiving the brunt of denigration.

been the target of for hundreds of years.[9] Historical evidence suggests that Christians and Muslims alike in Iberia and other parts of Europe associated blackness with servitude and slavery, as dark-skinned slaves were treated

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[9] Up to this point dark-skinned people had been depicted in varying ways in medieval iconography, some positive and some not. For many, this iconography framed their point of view of dark-skinned people. Despite the favorable depiction of black people in Nativity scenes or the Magi or heroic expressions of saints like Saint Gregory the Moor, Ethiopians gradually moved to the margins of the European imagination. Broader negative views of dark-skinned people set in when the Portuguese purchased slaves along the coast of Guinea and offered them for sale in the port cities of the predominantly Christian Iberia. Fredrickson and others propose that black people were not always demonized and consider claims to the contrary to be overstated. Fredrickson writes: "Artistic and literary representations of these distant and exotic peoples ranged from monstrous and horrifying to saintly and heroic. On the one hand, devils were sometimes pictured as having dark skins and what may appear to be African features, and executioners of martyrs were often portrayed as black men. The symbolic association of blackness with evil and death and whiteness with goodness and purity unquestionably had some effect in predisposing light-skinned people against those with darker pigmentation. But the significance of this cultural proclivity can be exaggerated. If black always had unfavorable connotations, why did many orders of priests and nuns wear black instead of white or some other color?" (26).

more poorly than their white-skinned counterparts.[10] For Christians, the biblical narrative of the enslavement of Ham's descendant as destined by God was justification for the poor treatment of their darker-skinned slaves, as well as for the practice of slavery in general, as they believed that it was God that made the slave trade possible in the first place.

 European biblical scholars of the Middle Ages believed the Hamites may have been "blackened" by their

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[10] Bernard Lewis (*Race and Slavery in the Middle East* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990], 44-45, 55) and William McKee Evans ("From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea," *American Historical Review* 85, no. 1 [1980]: 15-43) argue that the curse of Ham from Genesis 9:18-28 (also known as the curse theory), which doomed his descendants to perpetual bondage because of his treatment of Noah in Genesis, was an Islamic idea that influenced Christianity's readings of the text. A few medieval Muslim writers such as Ibn Khaldun and Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari proposed the view that Noah's curse on Ham's descendants included blackness and slavery, and others have argued that Jewish texts, namely, the Talmud and Midrash, lay the foundation for this view. However, David H. Aaron argues that this is an unfounded position, as no significant documentation has been presented to verify it ("Early Rabbinic Exegesis on Noah's Son Ham and the So-Called 'Hamitic Myth'." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63, no. 4 [1995]: 721-59, http://0-www.jstor.org.library.regent.edu/stable/1465466).

sins.[11] During this time, white Europeans began to favor enslaving Africans over their fellow white Europeans, and European colonists would use this distorted theological justification to support the African slave trade well into the

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[11] The curse theory had long been an accepted theological perspective on black-skinned people. Eutychius, an Alexandrian Melkite patriarch (d. 940), wrote, "Cursed be Ham and may he be a servant to his brothers. . . . He himself and his descendants, who are the Egyptians, the Negroes, the Ethiopians and (it is said) the Barbari" See Pococke's (1658–59) translation of the *Annales*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus graeca*, vol. 111, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris, 1863), cols. 889-1232. Ishodad of Merv, the Syrian Christian bishop of Hedhatha (ninth century), stated that "when Noah cursed Canaan—instantly, by the force of the curse— . . . his face and entire body became black [*ukmotha*]. This is the black color which has persisted in his descendants." See *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium* 156, Scriptores Syri 75, ed. C. Van Den Eynde (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1955), 139. Ibn al-Tayyib, an Arabic Christian scholar from Baghdad (d. 1043) asserted that "the curse of Noah affected the posterity of Canaan who were killed by Joshua son of Nun. At the moment of the curse, Canaan's body became black and the blackness spread out among them." See *Commentaire sur la Genèse*, *Corpus scriptorum Christianorum orientalium* 274-75, Scriptores Arabici 24-25, ed. Joannes C. J. Sanders (Louvain: L. Durbecq, 1967), 1:56 (text), 2:52-55 (translation). Bar Hebraeus, a Syrian Christian scholar, (1226–86) wrote, "And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father and showed [it] to his two brothers, That is . . . that Canaan was cursed and not Ham, and with the very curse he became black and the blackness was transmitted to his descendants. . . . And he said, 'Cursed be Canaan! A servant of servants shall he be to his brothers.'" See *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament*, pt. 1: *Genesis to II Samuel*, ed. Samuel Martin Sprengling and William Creighton Graham (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), 40-41. It came to be used as a justification for serfdom during the medieval era. Honorius Augustodunensis (c. 1100) was the first on record to propose a caste system associating Ham with serfdom. He wrote that serfs were descended from Ham, nobles from Japheth, and free men from Shem. This idea was widely promoted in Europe. With the decline of serfdom, the interpretation that serfs were descendants of Ham was thrown out. But it paved the way for further interpretation.

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, making them the first known segregationists.[12]

Since Africans were not Christians, many Christians, including the Puritans, further rationalized slavery by considering it to be a missionary endeavor and necessary to bringing order to society.[13] As William Perkins, a Cambridge professor who was influential in British Puritanism, wrote in his published text *Ordering a Familie*, "Though the servant in regard of faith and the inner man be equal to his master, in regard of the outward man . . . the mast is above the servant."[14] Perkins believed that Africans and other dark-skinned people had equal souls but unequal bodies, an important (albeit flawed) distinction that he used to defend

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[12] Ibram X. Kendi makes a distinction between curse theorists and climate theorists, who hold the view that Africa's climate transformed the skin of the people who lived there. He calls climate theorists "assimilationists who believed Black people were capable of becoming White if they moved to a cooler climate. This was a popular theory of the sixteenth century until English travel writer George Best discovered the dark-skinned Inuit people when he embarked on an Arctic voyage in 1577. Assimilationists also argued monogenesis, 'that all humans were one species descended from a single human creation in Europe's Garden of Eden,' whereas Segregationists argued polygenesis, 'that there were multiple origins of multiple human species'. . . . In an effort to explain Blackness he too defaulted to the curse of Ham/Canaan theory (*Stamped from the Beginning* [New York: Nation Books, 2016], 31-32. See also Benjamin Braude, "The Sons of Noah and the Construction of Ethnic and Geographical Identities in the Medieval and Early Modern Periods," *William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997):103-142.

[13] Africa has a rich history of Christianity, dating back to 1st or early 2nd century. In the 7th century Christianity began to diminish significantly under the rise of Islam. In the 15th century Christianity came to Sub-Saharan Africa with the arrival of the Portuguese.

[14] Kendi, 33.

the master/slave relationship as being mutually beneficial. Later on, famous Puritan preachers John Cotton and Richard Mather (grandfather to Cotton Mather) would use Perkins's anthropology to justify the evangelization of Africans without challenging the morality of slavery.[15]

From the middle ages on, the misguided influence of European religious leaders intermingled with the equally foundational societal elements of economics and politics to form a fundamentally flawed understanding of the humanity of dark-skinned and, later, specifically African people.[16] The inferior identity assigned to Africans would eventually morph into an explicitly racial form of slavery that would be used to oppress black people well into the twentieth century.

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[15] Ibid.

[16] Robert C. Linthicum states, "It is widely suggested that the systems that order the life of a city are economic, political, and religious" (*City of God: City of Satan: A Biblical Theology of the Urban Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991], 47).

CULTURAL SYSTEMS AND IDEOLOGY IN MODERN RACISM

Culture can be understood as "a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" or "a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."[17] Culture is an always changing, always moving stream of interaction of beliefs and practices between people. It is a way of life that precedes us and exists long after us, and while we are living, it shapes us through its embedded narratives, language, rituals, and conventional norms, what is called a cultural system. Sociologist Peter Berger suggests that the formation of cultural systems can be

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[17] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

understood as a three-step process of externalization, institutionalization, and internalization.[18]

Externalization begins when individuals come together to form a community. Each individual contributes a set of implicit and explicit values, life experiences, and expectations to the larger group. Over time, a collective group identity forms, whether subconsciously or consciously.

Institutionalization occurs once group identity develops into a mutually shared set of values and expectations that create an interplay between discourse, habitualization—behaviors and practices that become habits and patterns of behavior—and boundaried social practices—social practices that require commitments, beliefs, etc, in order to be included. As part of the institutionalization process, the group creates stories, definitions, languages, and expectations, builds collective memories around shared experiences, and constructs plausibility structures to produce a communal narrative based on conscious norms, rituals, and explicit behaviors. The group also begins to forge trusting interpersonal

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[18] Peter Berger, *The Scared Canopy: Elements of A Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Random House, 1967), 4-19. For a more detailed examination of Berger's proposal, see Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Random House, 1966).

relationships, resulting in social capital.[19] At this point, the cultural system takes on a life of its own and has the potential to evolve beyond the original set of values and expectations and multiply into new movements and mechanisms.

Internalization happens when institutions have secured the capacity to influence those who are a part of the community. The plausibility structures that establish ways of being and doing life within the community get habitualized into a politic—an orderly and governed way of life. At this point, a communal narrative arises that holds sway over the life of each member. The created system is now the basis for the orientation of each individual member's identity, producing a script by which the members live and understand reality as well form new ideas and beliefs.

Ideas and beliefs relate to reality in two ways: either as the *facts* of reality or as a *reaction* to reality. When ideas and beliefs take on more of the characteristics of the latter, emotions like hate, anxiety, fear, or desire can easily influence one's ideas and beliefs, yielding a distorted

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[19] James S. Coleman's groundbreaking study on community "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital" (*American Journal of Sociology* 94, supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of Social Structure [1988]: S95-S120) offers a good definition of social capital. "Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (S98). For Coleman, social capital largely derives from the value of interpersonal connections that offer benefit and support, harnessing a tangible economic value.

psychology of ideological thought.[20] Therefore, ideology can be understood as being socially determined and primarily influenced by perceived antagonisms that arise from civic life. When one's preferred way of life is threatened, one uses ideological thought as a "mask or weapon" in the struggle for advantage and power or as a "symptom and remedy" to correct an unstable cultural system.[21]

What began as a matter of belief among Europeans—ethnoreligious superiority, particularly that European Christianity was superior to all other forms of religion, especially Judaism—became a system of ideas grounded in imperial expansion and formed by a theopolitical ideology of white superiority. Europeans developed social practices and designed institutional patterns, including a system of economics, whose expressed aim was hurt groups of people considered "races," which in turn gave rise to a racialized cultural system of white supremacy "that was used to justify the crimes against indigenous people and Africans that created the nation. That ideology also has justified legal and extralegal exploitation of every non-white immigrant group, and is used to this day to rationalize the racialized disparities in the distribution of wealth and well-being in the society."[22]

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[20] Geertz, 196-97.

[21] Ibid., 201. In his description of ideological formation, Geertz describes the first—a mask and weapon—as interest theory, and the second—symptom and remedy—as strain theory.

[22] Robert Jenson, "White Privilege / White Supremacy," in *White Privilege: Essential Reasons on the Other Side of Racism,* ed. Paula S. Rothenberg (New York: Worth Publishers, 2016), 157.

For civic life to work to the advantage of white superiority, the existence of an institutional system of separation and belonging resulting in distinct categories of race, class, sexuality, place or origin, religion, and the like is necessary. The European development of such a system secured the social displacement and marginalization of African Americans in what was later to become the United States of America.

By the time Virginia began colonizing, a race-based system of separating and belonging was already at work. Like their ancestors before them, European colonizers in Virginia used the Hamitic curse theory to degrade and dehumanize blackness. For example, in 1615 Reverend Thomas Cooper gave an address to planters in Ireland and Virginia in which he asserted the following: "White Shem, one of Noah's three sons, 'shall be Lord over' the 'cursed race of Cham'—meaning Noah's son Ham—in Africa."[23]

Throughout England and the English colonies Africans were perceived as "filthy sodomites, sleepers, ignorant, beasts, disciples of Cham . . . to whom the black darkness is reserved for ever."[24] Not surprisingly, Virginia colonizers drew a clear and official line of separation between Africans and whites, including white servants.[25] During this time, the Virginia legislature passed statutes to

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[23] Kendi, 36. Kendi points out that the word *race* is of fifteenth century origin and was co-opted from its original association with hunting dogs. It appeared in the dictionary for the first time in 1606 to mean *descent*.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 36-39. For example, when Virginia governor George Yeardly died in 1627, he listed "negars" after "servants" and before "cattle," reflecting the economic hierarchy.

create a racialized cultural system that later would serve as the cornerstone for the social practices and institutional patterns on which the United States would be founded. For example, in 1630 the Virginia court determined that female African bodies could defile white male bodies in what is the first recorded instance of gender-based racism in America.[26] Later, the Virginia General Assembly specifically excepted African Americans from the requirement of possessing arms (1639-40), declared black women as taxable to mark the distinction between African and English women (1642), and ruled that any child born to an enslaved woman was to also be a slave, creating an opportunity for generational servitude (1662).[27]

In 1680, a slave rebellion in which both white laborers and African slaves participated led the Virginia General Assembly to establish a new set of laws that pardoned the white participants while simultaneously making it illegal for a black slave to "lift up his hand against any Christian," punishable by thirty lashes on the slave's bare back.[28] Also now illegal were all gatherings of black slaves, including funerals. The 1705 Virginia slave code compelled planters to provide freed white servants with fifty acres of land. Thanks to these laws and more like them, white people, including

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Colonial Williamsburg Foundation website, "Slavery and the Law in Virginia," accessed September 20, 2018, http://www.history.org/history/teaching/slavelaw.cfm.

[28] Ibid.

poor white laborers, now held absolute power over African people in Virginia.[29]

These Virginia statutes were not merely political in nature but theopolitical and economic as well. Legislators encouraged slave owners to Christianize their enslaved men, women, and children. In the 1640s and 1650s, some slaves used their status as Christian to argue for their own freedom or for the freedom of a child. Following the precedent set in New York (1664), however, Virginia lawmakers declared in 1667 that baptism did not bring freedom to African Americans. Later, in 1727, Edmund Gibson, an Anglican bishop in London, would commend the Virginian leadership for the 1667 statute.[30]

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[29] Kendi. 54, 68. "By the early eighteenth century," Kendi notes, "every Virginian county had a militia of landless Whites 'ready in case of any sudden eruption of Indians or insurrection of Negroes.' Poor Whites had risen into their lowly place in slave society—the armed defenders of planters" (54).

[30] Ibid., 49, 73-74.

SOCIAL DISPLACEMENT AND RACIALIZED CULTURAL SYSTEMS

The impact of race-based separation policies is not limited to the direct fallout of legislation, however. Since all other social institutions—education, health care, culture and arts, social services—are subsystems of the religion, politics, and economics that order civic life, and since America was founded on a racialized theopolitical economic system, the housing system fell in line with the prevailing governmental and legal trends of the day and worked against people of color as well.[31]

Following the post–Civil War Reconstruction period, liberated slaves began dispersing throughout the United States, yet despite this dispersal, residential integration declined quickly and steadily well into the mid-twentieth

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[31] Linthicum points out that religion, politics, and economics serve as the foundation to civic life (47).

century thanks to localized racial zoning ordinances.[32] From the time of the Great Depression in the 1930s and into the 1950s, the country experienced a critical housing shortage, leaving only affluent Americans able to afford housing. During the shortage, working-class and middle-class white and black families suffered, with multiple family units often forced to cram into a single small apartment.

In response to the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt passed the New Deal, a series of relief programs, job programs, labor rights bills and housing programs aimed at providing aid to struggling Americans. Unfortunately, many of the programs facilitated by New Deal agencies followed racialized practices.[33] For example, job training camps for jobless youth often excluded black applicants in favor of white applicants, while "segregationists made sure that farmers and domestics—Blacks' primary vocations—were excluded from the [New Deal's] new job benefits, like minimum wage, social security, unemployment insurance, and unionizing rights."[34]

The New Deal created the nation's first public housing for civilian citizens. Given the cultural reality of segregation, race determined the program's design. Separate buildings were constructed for African Americans in certain mixed-

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[32] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017), 39-40.

[33] Agencies such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Public Works Administration, the U.S. Housing Authority, and the Federal Housing Administration adopted racialized practices and policies.

[34] Rothstein, 18-20; Kendi, 337.

raced developments, and in many others across the U.S., they were totally excluded.[35]

During FDR's time in office, the appointed head of the Public Works Administration (PWA), the agency tasked with alleviating the housing shortage and creating new housing construction jobs, created the "neighborhood composition rule." This rule mandated that new housing projects must reflect the existing racial composition of the neighborhood in which they were located. New projects in predominantly white communities could only house white tenants, those in African American communities could house only African American tenants, and projects in existing integrated communities could house either.

Existing neighborhood composition did not always have the final say, however. In some cases, the government leveraged the neighborhood composition rule to segregate projects even where there was no previous pattern of segregation. As Richard Rothstein notes,

> At the time, many urban neighborhoods contained both black and white (mostly immigrant) low-income families. The neighborhoods were integrated because workers of both races needed to live close to the down factory jobs to which they walked. . . . The PWA designated many integrated neighborhoods as either white or black and then used public housing to make the designation come true—by installing Whites-only projects in mixed neighborhoods it

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[35] Rothstein, 19.

deemed "White" and Blacks-only projects in those it deemed "colored."[36]

Rothstein tells the story of the Techwood Homes in Atlanta, the PWA's first project in 1935. As part of the project, the PWA demolished and cleared a low-income, integrated neighborhood of sixteen hundred families that were nearly one-third African American and then rebuilt the neighborhood with 604 units for white people only. This displaced almost 530 African American families and further strengthened the racialized cultural system of segregated housing. Displaced families who could not secure new housing were forced to move in with relatives and subdivide housing, which increased the population density in many predominantly African American neighborhoods, turning them into what would later be called slums.[37]

Like the PWA, the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) racialized the economic aspects of housing by drawing "color-coded" maps, marking African American neighborhoods in red as undesirable. Under this system, mortgage brokers could deny financing on homes in "undesirable" areas and thereby prevent African Americans from purchasing homes and acquiring wealth.[38]

In 1937 the PWA program of direct federal construction of public housing came to an end, which meant that local agencies had to take over the work. This

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[36] Ibid., 20-21.

[37] Ibid., 21-22.

[38] Kendi, 337.

resulted in the creation of the United States Housing Authority (USHA), which unfortunately continued the PWA's segregated housing practices. For instance, the USHA manual stated that it was inappropriate to build projects for white families "in areas now occupied by Negroes," adding that "the aim of the authority should be the preservation rather than disruption of community social structures which best fit the desires of the group concerned."[39]

In its 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that state and local courts could not uphold whites-only real estate covenants and also could not halt housing desegregation efforts. Unfortunately, though, the Supreme Court's ruling was toothless when it came to dealing with the underlying white privilege inherent in many housing practices. Not surprisingly, many municipalities continued to find ways to displace people of color even after the *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruling. By this point, segregated housing practices had already proved to be significantly disruptive and detrimental to African American communities.[40] Not only did these practices often mean that African American housing was built inconveniently far from centers of commerce, trade, and retail, but they also resulted in a loss of social capital due to the forced displacement of African Americans from close-knit, insular neighborhoods to new high-rise housing projects.

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[39] Rothstein 23.

[40] Kendi, 357-58. President Truman's Justice Department filed the brief to the Supreme Court that delivered a victory to the African American and migrant community with respect to the racialized housing system.

CHAPTER 4

A LOCAL ACCOUNT OF SOCIAL DISPLACEMENT

Williamsburg, Virginia—the heart of the so-called Historic Triangle, birthplace of the United States, and home to the College of William and Mary—has been entrenched in a racialized cultural system of religion, economics, and politics since its founding, as evidenced in part by the words of local ministers at the time. For instance, in 1724 English clergyman and William & Mary professor Hugh Jones wrote the *Present State of Virginia*, which became an influential text, to inform his contemporaries in England of the state of affairs in the Virginia colony. "Christianity encourages and orders" African people, Jones claims, "to become more humble and better servants," adding that Africans should remain illiterate because they were "by Nature cut out for hard Labour and Fatigue." Echoing Jones, influential clergyman James Blair, namesake of one of the middle schools in present-day Williamsburg, preached in 1722 that the golden rule required masters to baptize their slaves and treat them kindly but that it did not imply equality between "superiors

and inferiors."[41] By 1775, slaves accounted for more than half of Williamsburg's population.[42]

Over time, Williamsburg's racialized theopolitical economic system came to affect all of the city's social institutions, including housing. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, established in 1926 to build a local tourist economy by "restoring" the city's historic roots, has played a particular role in this process. On June 12, 1928, Reverend Dr. W. A. R. Goodwin, a lifelong southerner, the son of a Confederate army captain, and rector of historic Bruton Parish Episcopal Church in Williamsburg, called the citizens of Williamsburg to a town hall meeting to cast a vision for the John D. Rockefeller–funded restoration of Colonial Williamsburg.[43] The town's approximately seven hundred African American residents were not allowed to attend because Jim Crow laws prohibited them from entering the whites-only school where the meeting was held. Instead, these residents had to wait to hear secondhand that the white residents of Williamsburg voted to turn the quiet town into a tourist mecca.

Before the restoration and modernization of Williamsburg, the city was an integrated mix of white-owned and African American–owned businesses, although

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[41] Kendi, 74.

[42] http://slaveryandremembrance.org/partners/partner/?id=P0000

[43] Victor Reklaitis, "W. A. R. Goodwin: Father of Colonial Restoration Effort," *Daily Press*, August 20, 2006, accessed September 20, 2018, https://www.dailypress.com/news/dp-xpm-20060820-2006-08-20-0608200001-story.html.

residents knew where the unofficial boundaries were.[44] The conversion of the city into a tourist destination would change all of this. According to a 1929 map titled "City Plan of Williamsburg" made by one of the original architects of Colonial Williamsburg, houses was to be divided into four categories: colonial, republic, modern, and "Negro."[45]

With the city plan established, Rockefeller's new Williamsburg Holding Company purchased a significant amount of land, buildings, and homes in the "historic area" with the goal of removing all structures that did not conform with pre-nineteenth-century historic standards and style. Not surprisingly, Williamsburg's racialized cultural system of segregated housing greatly influenced how existing homeowners in the newly designated historic area were treated. Some homeowners were displaced, while others were allowed to surrender their titles, renovate their homes, and remain as permanent tenants.[46] In general, affluent white homeowners were more likely to be allowed to remain, whereas lower-income residents were more often required to sell their homes and move.

Among the displaced families from the historic area, whites could move wherever they liked. African Americans, however, were only allowed to purchase new homes in certain areas, creating three predominantly African

[44] Mary Miley Theobald, "African Americans and the Restoration of Williamsburg," http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/summer14/restoration.cfm.

[45] "City Plan of Williamsburg," commissioned in 1929, John D. Rockefeller Library Special Collections.

[46] Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 2002), 24.

American neighborhoods.[47] Furthermore, displaced African American homeowners received considerably less compensation for their homes in comparison to white citizens.[48] Thirty-eight of the houses bought by Rockefeller were owned by African-Americans, making up roughly half of the buildings found in Colonial Williamsburg today.[49]

Vernon Geddy, a local attorney whose practice still exists today, handled a majority of the real estate transactions during the time of the historic area "restoration." He would go on to become vice president of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. In a revealing 1952 interview discussing his work on behalf of the effort, Geddy said that he "always had splendid cooperation from *most* of the people of Williamsburg."[50]

The effects of racialized housing segregation in Williamsburg coupled with the restoration of the historic area are still felt today. The cultural system that arose from converting Williamsburg from a small town to a tourist mecca with a strictly tourism-based economy continues to

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[47] Ibid. Six blocks outside of the city center were made available. This became the site of the city's black school, Union Baptist Church and in time, some black-owned businesses and homes. See http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/summer14/restoration.cfm.

[48] Rex M. Ellis notes that "while many white families were allowed to stay, or given top dollar for their properties, the majority of black families received less for their property and in some cases were forced to move" ("The African-American Community in Williamsburg (1947-1998)" [Williamsburg, VA: Williamsburg Traditions, 2002], 231).

[49] Greenspan, 24.

[50] http://www.history.org/foundation/journal/summer14/restoration.cfm.

promote the marginalization and displacement of people of color and the poor. In 1930s Williamsburg, African Americans accounted for 30 percent of the city's population. Today, that percentage has been cut nearly in half, coming in at just under 14 percent of the area's ninety thousand plus residents.[51] Additionally, of the three black neighborhoods created during the restoration of the historic area, White City no longer exists and Braxton Court is no longer majority African American.[52]

      Affordable housing for people of color and poor whites remains limited today in greater Williamsburg, which includes the City of Williamsburg as well as the surrounding area in James City County. Williamsburg largely attracts highly paid workers and well-situated retirees whose purchasing power drives up the cost of housing and "encourage[s] private sector development to focus on the more profitable end of the housing spectrum." Therefore, lower-cost units are currently in short supply in James City County."[53] Relatedly, around 30 percent of James City County households are cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30 percent of their household income on

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[51] This information comes from to 2017 Census Bureau data; the data counts only those who claimed one race. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/jamescitycountyvirginia and https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/williamsburgcityvirginiacounty.

[52] Will Carmines, "From Magruder to Highland Park: The History of an African-American Community" (honor's thesis, College of William and Mary, 2010), 38-41.

[53] This information comes from the results of an outside study conducted by the county. https://jamescitycountyva.gov/3059/Housing-Affordability.

housing, and just over 42 percent are severely cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 50 percent of their household income on housing.[54] Additionally, more than thirteen thousand households (48 percent) are not in a position to buy a home in the county, and more than fifty-three hundred cannot afford to rent due to the area's high median gross rent (with utilities) of $1,148 per month.

Unfortunately, lucrative job opportunities are limited in Williamsburg's tourism-based economy, and so residents cannot simply find higher-paying employment. The top three employers are health care and social assistance ($36,611 per year), retail trade ($19,348 per year), and accommodation and food services ($20,187 per year). One-third of all workers in Williamsburg earn only $7.81 per hour ($1,354 per month). Assuming a 30 percent cost burden for rent, these residents can afford to pay at most $406 per month for housing if living alone and $812 per month if part of a dual-income household. This makes finding housing tough when the median gross rent with utilities is $1,148.

Furthermore, government-subsidized Section 8 housing options are minimal, spread throughout the area, and largely hidden from plain view. To acquire Section 8 housing, residents must first qualify, meaning they cannot have a felony conviction or an eviction on their record. For those that do qualify, only 792 Section 8 units are available, with 67 set aside exclusively for seniors. Plus, even these units exceed the 30 percent cost burden threshold at an average rent of $544 per month.

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[54] https://jamescitycountyva.gov/3059/Housing-Affordability.

The prevailing religious, economic, and political systems in the United States institutionalized a culture that from the beginning socially displaced African Americans and other people of color, and this group eventually grew to include all people live in poverty. The history of greater Williamsburg highlights this tragedy, revealing how the flip side to "restoration" and supposed progress is often segregation, displacement, poverty, and eventually homelessness among people of color, the poor, and other vulnerable populations.

A THEOLOGY FOR THE REALITY OF SOCIAL EVIL

Understanding the social construction of reality and the formation of cultural systems from the perspective of the Christian faith requires consideration of a theology of social evil. In this framework the cosmos are divided into two reigns or kingdoms (Romans 5:12-21, Colossians 1:13-14). One reign is what the apostle Paul refers to as "the reign of sin and death." This takes in not just the human condition but an institutionalized sociocultural condition of the cosmos or "the world." The New Testament's primary usage of this term refers to "the order of society and indicates that evil has a social and political character beyond the isolated actions of individuals."[55]

Put in modern societal terms, the reign of sin and death is the sphere of human existence characterized by violence and fear and where power is most often expressed through acts of injustice and oppression. It encompasses the structures of civilized life, where self-indulgence and self-actualization are the priority and where people,

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[55] Stephen Charles Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 4.

individually or collectively, are free to determine what is right, wrong, good and just. Sometimes these postures are dressed in the clothes of religion, and sometimes they are not.

What follows from the reign of sin and death is a society that is schooled in denial and that engages in ongoing rebellion against God and his intentions for society, which have always been wholeness, compassion, righteousness, and love. This is not to suggest that all who live under this reign are evil, however, but instead that the reign of sin and death is both internalized and habitualized by its participants as an institutionalized social structuring of evil. Therefore, all social systems formed by these participants will inevitably reflect and mediate the values, expectations, and narratives that align with the reign of sin and death and subsequently create a distinctive cultural system.

The counter to the reign of sin and death is what the apostle Paul calls the reign of grace, which is also a systemic description of both the human and sociocultural condition. The reign of grace is the sphere of our human existence where violence and fear are usurped by a commitment to reconciliation and peace and where power is expressed only through humble, self-giving love. It is the place where humility gives birth to generosity and gracious hospitality and the place where faith is the light by which humanity both sees and walks. This guiding faith is not a generic faith, however; instead, it is a faith that rests singularly in an allegiance to the compassionate purposes of God as revealed in Jesus Christ. In the reign of grace, Jesus as Lord and King determines what is true, good, and

beautiful because he is what God looks like. As the apostle John proclaims, Jesus is the divine logic (logos) of God made flesh, and he—his way of being and doing life in the world, his dying and triumphantly resurrecting—is what God has to say to humanity.

Those who live under the reign of grace trust that there is no need to resort to the old ways of violence and fear because their hope, identity, and security rests in a kingdom that will never falter or fail. They have nothing to prove and can thus let go of the defensive postures and destructive patterns that the reign of sin and death encourages. They are also aware that they share responsibility in the injustices prevalent in society, and they live up to that responsibility, by committing to live in God's presence in such a way that makes his reign tangible even in the midst of the reign of sin and death. Finally, because those living under the reign of grace are themselves a reconciled and forgiven community, God commands them to do what it takes to become a reconciling and forgiving community that refuses to be schooled in denial and readily admits that the reign of sin and death promotes and upholds cultural systems of injustice, violence, and fear.

Denial has always had a few schools located in the reign of grace, and it has employed many pastors, politicians, and political pundits as its teachers who offer rational, philosophical, sociological, and theological explanations that convincingly relay a false narrative of innocence despite what we see, especially when it comes to the "-isms" of society. They extend invitations to indifference and apathy that help maintain unjust cultural

systems and help nurture a life of complicity with the reign of sin and death. It is here—within these systems under the reign of sin and death—that the poor are politicized, racism is denied, religious certitude is paramount, two-thirds of the world goes mostly ignored, loving enemies is optional and situational, sexual preferences and orientations are threatening, and freedom and hope are built on nationalistic realities and promises that lead down various paths of entitlement.

But when a society formed by the reign of grace, otherwise called the Church, is most faithful, its members do not bury their heads in the sand or separate themselves from the world. Instead, they enter into it, even into the suffering and violence, by practicing a form of self-giving love that reasons with the world through faithful presence, humble rhetoric, and, if need be, courageous martyrdom—but never by coercive force. Christian hospitality becomes an embodied practice of solidarity with strangers, a mutual relationship of faithful presence, of compassion and generosity, where we come together in the struggle for dignity, worth, and empowerment in the reign of King Jesus. This is what I call hospitality as homemaking.

THE HOSPITALITY OF GOD AND HIS HOMEMAKING PRESENCE

When our society speaks of hospitality today, we do not normally think of a kinship love for strangers, which is the meaning of *philoxenia*, the biblical Greek word usually translated as "hospitality," because our culture of xenophobia pushes back against the impulse to make room for strangers with a welcoming embrace. Instead, hospitality today elicits images of cocktail parties and an atmosphere of comfort. In a post-9/11 world, fear has cast out love (1 John 4:18), thus relegating Christian hospitality to a romanticized ideal, one practice among many possible Christian practices rather than an alternative way of being in society.

For the early Church, by contrast, it was a way of being, not just a practice. The early mothers and fathers of the Christian faith welcomed others, including strangers and those incapable of reciprocity, with relational embrace. Hospitality encompassed the whole person, as it addressed the social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and spiritual

dimensions of personhood. To early Christian writers, hospitality was a moral obligation brought forth by the inbreaking of God's kingdom, a fundamental expression of the gospel, and vital for faithful Christian witness.[56] So much so, in fact, that the early Church mothers and fathers considered sharing meals, homes, and worship with people of different backgrounds to be a significant identity marker of the Christian faith.[57]

For the people of ancient Israel, a significant part of what it meant to be the people of God was an understanding of themselves as sojourners with a responsibility to care for the vulnerable strangers in their midst. Jesus, who was dependent on the hospitality of others during much of his time on earth, also served as a gracious host in his words and in his actions. Those who turned to him found welcome and rest and the promise of reception into the Kingdom. He urged his hosts to follow his example by opening their tables to more than family and friends who could reciprocate and by giving generous welcome to the poor and sick who had little to offer in return. In fact, Jesus even promised that welcoming the stranger, feeding the hungry person, and visiting the sick were acts of generosity and kindness to the Son of Man himself.

Hospitality begins in creation. In the Genesis narrative, we see God making room in his infinite and

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[56] Shepherd of Hermas, Mandate 8:8–10. See also John Chrysostom, Homily 45 on Acts, Homily 14 on 1 Timothy, and Homily 66 on Matthew.

[57] Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 4.

omnipresent life for a finite and limited creation, including us. He did so not stoically or out of obligation but instead in love and out of desire. As a "homemaking God who creates a world for inhabitation," he welcomes us into his life to share in all that he is and all that he has, including his good creation. Our God is a homemaking, hospitable God, and hospitality is central to his triune being.[58]

Later in the Genesis narrative, the Lord comes to Abraham and Sarah as "three strangers" that Abraham and Sarah then welcome to dinner (Gen 18:1–8). In a simple reading of this text, one might conclude that Abraham and Sarah extended hospitality. But read in light of the creation narrative, it is instead God who extends hospitality. All of creation is his, yet he chooses to come and dine with Abraham and Sarah.

The welcome and embrace of God is concrete and particular, as particular as his incarnation revealed to the world through a Jewish man named Jesus, born in a small town called Bethlehem of a woman named Mary. In the incarnation we see what humanity-affirming, dignity-restoring, homemaking hospitality looks like; we see the hospitality of God. Matthew wants to be sure we know God's intention for Jesus from the beginning: He is Immanuel, God with us (Matt 1:23). John tells us that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was both with God and was God. This Word, the divine logic of God, became flesh and took up residence among us.

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[58] Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 14. I owe the language of "homemaking God" to the authors of this insightful work.

Jesus invites his followers to learn the way of God's welcome alongside him as he teaches the worshippers in synagogues, heals unclean tormented people, journeys through Galilean neighborhoods, touches lepers with his own hand, shows compassion to the vulnerable, and shares a table with sinners (Mark 1:14–20, 23, 27, 29–41; 2:15–17). He challenges narrow definitions of hospitality as he presses his hearers to move outward to the margins of society and welcome those with whom they least desire to have connections, especially those incapable of reciprocity (Luke 14:7–23, Matt 25:31–46). He teaches us not to view people marginalized and displaced by sociocultural and economic realities as projects to fix, problems to be solved or prospects to save; rather, they are to be joined with and welcomed as friends, because friendships and places of welcome are where human flourishing takes place. Hospitality as *philoxenia* can be understood as solidarity with strangers, a mutual relationship of faithful presence, of compassion and generosity, where we come together in the struggle for dignity, worth, and empowerment.

By welcoming and embracing sinners, Jesus reveals that God is willing to make room in his life to welcome all, contrary to what the prevalent religious narratives of exclusion and hospitality may teach. Home—human flourishing—is found in the welcoming presence of God along with all others who welcome Jesus as Lord. The early Christian writers bear witness to this and summon all others who have received the gospel to do the same.

HOSPITALITY AS HOMEMAKING AMONG THE SOCIALLY DISPLACED IN A RACIALIZED CULTURAL SYSTEM

Over and over again in the biblical story God is portrayed as a gracious and generous homemaker whose hospitality is connected to his sovereign presence and provision. From the wilderness of the Exodus to Galilee, God provides sustenance to the hungry and often ungrateful. Like Israel, we are displaced foreigners and strangers who are wholly dependent on God's welcome and provision. No longer estranged, we have been adopted by God, who has called us his children and made us members of his household (Gal 4:4–6; 1 Tim. 3:15). No longer displaced, we have been naturalized by him as citizens of his kingdom (Eph 2:12–19). If we are like Israel, however, then our displacement and estrangement also makes us accountable for our treatment of the displaced and

estranged. As a people who find ourselves at home with God, we are called as a community of hospitality to become homemakers and bear witness to God's gracious hospitality.

Today we must move beyond a narrow understanding of witness as being mere observation and instead rediscover the transformative nature of Christian witness. Witnesses are actively involved in making someone or something known to everyone around them. It is a participatory role, one that presupposes an experience of God's welcoming embrace, which in turn necessitates a proclamation or demonstration of that experience for the benefit of others. As we experience this embrace despite our brokenness and ungratefulness, we are compelled to bear witness to this experience by extending his welcome to others and make our home, all together, with God. As the apostle Paul has said, we welcome one another as Christ welcomed us to the glory of God so that by the power of the Holy Spirit working within, between, and among us our way of being in the world will overflow with hope (Rom 15:7, 13).

When the Church embraces a different and more imaginative understanding of witness, it relinquishes self-serving agendas and attendance growth strategies in favor of a theology of hospitality that adequately upholds the prophetic witness of Christ's Church, a witness formed by hospitality as homemaking that subverts the narrativized systems of anxiety, coercion, scarcity and exclusivism. This witness disrupts the status quo as it tears down walls of division, closes the gaps between proximity and neighborliness, and makes reconciliation between all people possible.

The Church whose posture is formed by hospitality reorganizes its life for the practice of presence with others, trusting that the Spirit of Jesus is mysteriously at work within, between, and among them. As the congregation catches a glimpse of the Spirit's work, it will humbly, boldly, and faithfully bear witness to his work and invite others to see and hear what God is doing and saying. When gathered as a people, the Church serves both as gracious host to God and the other while simultaneously receiving the hospitality of God; the members of the Church make room in their communal life for the other with a welcoming embrace.

Hospitality as witness also helps a congregation contextualize the gospel. In listening and being present with others, the Church gives up settling for abstract propositions that are disembodied from real life but labeled as gospel. Rather, it will hear where the bad news is felt and known—where the reign of sin and death is clearly having its way in the lives of the socially displaced and marginalized—and bear witness to good news in a way that offers a new vision of life and love where all can be welcomed and at home with God through Jesus Christ as Lord.

Cultivating a culture of hospitality and homemaking in the congregational context is particularly important in a culture of social displacement upheld by racialized cultural systems. A community that embodies hospitality contradicts the contemporary messages and systems of coercion and exclusion that tell us who is valuable and invaluable, significant and insignificant, worthy and unworthy and instead serves as a sign of hope that self-

giving love is possible. In such a congregation, the Church becomes a community where race, class, gender, sexual preference, and other identity markers are not weaponized and used as methods of separation and exclusion but instead are both embraced as beautiful signs of diversity and simultaneously placed in submission to the new identity given to us as members of God's household. This kind of relentless hope, found in communities organized around hospitality as witness, allows all people, guests and hosts alike, to flourish in challenging and transformative ways. Such communities redefine the power center of society, welcoming all into a life of cruciform power in which all that we have can be leveraged for the good of another as together we make our home with God.

Ultimately, if the Church is to welcome and embrace the socially displaced and marginalized, a reorganization of priorities will be necessary as the congregation shifts from program-centered practices to the practice of faithful presence. When hospitality becomes the posture of the Church and forms the congregation into a homemaking community, a new kind of Spirit-birthed power will overflow from within. Just as the gospel was born on the margins of the Galilean society, so too the Church is reborn at the margins of its own society.

A theology of hospitality as homemaking uniquely positions the Church for a form of cultural engagement that Paul Kivel calls "social change work."[59] This form of engagement helps the Church move away from outsourcing

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59 Paul Kivell, "Social Service or Social Change," in *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex,* ed. Incite! (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 129.

peacemaking and justice work to paraministries, social services/human services agencies, or other organizations that only address individual needs and move toward challenging "the root causes of the exploitation and violence."[60] It establishes an ethic that requires working for the reconciliation and liberation of all people from the death-dealing systems of society created under the reign of sin and death. As the Church enters into the margins of society to bear witness to a different kind of politic and, in doing so, reorders the social order of the cosmos, a confrontation with powers and principalities is inevitable. Nevertheless, the Church will resist all systems of injustice, including the categories of separation and belonging these systems help to maintain, and actively discern ways to subversively work toward dismantling them.

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[60] Ibid.

THE ROLE OF THE EUCHARIST CULTIVATING FAITHFUL PRESENCE WITH THE SOCIALLY DISPLACED

There are several communal practices a local community of faith can embrace that can form a people of hospitality and homemaking. For the purposes of this conversation I have selected one: Eucharist.

A fresh vision of God's hospitality as remembered through the weekly practice of the Eucharist and the Eucharistic liturgy that accompanies it has played a significant role in enabling my church family, Williamsburg Christian Church, to learn faithful presence with those living through social displacement. It is an embodied weekly practice of gracious hospitality and homemaking as the large Sunday worship gathering now reaches its climax in the story told by the weekly Eucharist. The Eucharist is more

than a received practice, however; it is a communal practice of participation, as the form and function of the liturgy animates the minds and bodies of every one present.

Before the faith community receives the Eucharist, the members are reminded that in the New Covenant community, the center of worship is no longer the altar, but a table. At the table, the local Church remembers not only the New Covenant meal itself but also with whom Jesus shared it and why. In order to recapture the transformative nature of communion taken together as God's people, the Church must forgo thinking of the Eucharist as merely symbolic and instead embrace the faith-forming, soul-shaping, life-giving, mystery inherent in the practice. In order for the faith community to embrace mystery, it must first renew its imagination.

The Eucharist is mystery because in this meal the faith community believes the bread and wine communicates the reality of Christ's presence and restorative work. Through the Eucharist, the people of God commune with Christ, and by the power of his Spirit they are able to discern his presence among them as together they learn to submit to his leading and recognize his work within the city. The Eucharistic is one that disgusted onlookers in the days of the early Church because the Church is eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ. Yet through this "disgusting" practice Christ's body and blood proclaims that no one is too "dirty" and that no one should be expelled or rejected based on society's judgment. Even the Judases within the Church can have a seat at Christ's table. Through the Eucharist, the Church remembers that holiness mixes with hospitality and

celebrates that combination, for it is God's radical embrace in Christ that makes the Church holy, and it is because we are holy that we must extend God's hospitality to others. Therefore, dehumanization has no place among God's people. The table declares that anyone can find themselves at home with God through Christ.

The Eucharist is mystery because in this meal not only is Christ present at the table but he also serves the table just as he served the apostles. The table is his; the Church is there only by his invitation. Therefore, no one in the Church has the right or privilege to say who has a seat at his table. God has made room in his life for us through Christ, and at the table, we remember that we are called to do the same for one another. The table is no longer about who is clean or unclean, pure and impure, favor or disfavored, or deemed superior or inferior. Instead, the table reminds us that Jesus is the foundation of our life together and that all are welcomed because Jesus invites us. There is no room for prejudice or exclusionary practices at the table; in fact, these practices run counter to the mystery of the table that is at its core.

Furthermore, the Eucharist is mystery because, in this meal, the Church celebrates life by remembering death—and by recalling how Christ's death works in each member to call them to cruciform living. In doing so, the Father's gracious and faithful love for all people everywhere is also remembered. Those once displaced by the reign of sin and death have a home with God now and forever, and the Church is called to humility and thankfulness because God in Christ has extended his hospitality to all. It is in this meal

that the Church is called to welcome others, just as God in Christ has welcomed them.

Finally, at the Eucharistic table the Church remembers that God faced mortality and death just as we all do and overcame it. We learn to celebrate that we no longer have to fear or deny death, mortality, or any other biological vulnerability because all our physical dependencies find their resolution in Christ our gracious Host. The Church can leave the Eucharistic table as liberated victors over death who are freed from the fear that systems of injustice seek to provoke.

As each Christ follower brings the convergence of their Christian identity and ethnoracial identity to the table, the Eucharistic liturgy exposes the antagonisms at work within and between us. The table invites each member to submit their antagonisms and all of the values and expectations that compete against their baptismal identity first to the Lordship of Christ and then next to the people standing beside, behind, and in front of them. All participants then accept a particular set of explicitly stated and mutually shared values and expectations along with the bread and wine, creating a new boundaried social practice.

Each church member's week ends and begins at the table as part of our large Sunday worship gatherings. On the days between gatherings, members of the faith community meet in socioeconomically diverse communities that extend from the common life (koinonia) of the larger congregation Church, and through these encounters they share in life together. In the process, each member internalizes the story rehearsed during the weekly Eucharistic liturgy and practice, and the Church as a

collective becomes empowered with the imagination to become a hospitable community of homemakers committed to participating in the life of the hospitable homemaking God who is at work in the city through the crucified, risen and ascended Lord.

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Fred is a follower of Jesus, husband, father, a multi-vocational pastor with Williamsburg Christian Church, founder of 3e Restoration Inc, clinical trauma professional, ethnographer, community organizer, and TEDx alum. He has served as an adjunct professor at Regent University and Rochester University teaching courses in philosophy, ethics, christian history, theology, leadership, and ethnography. He received my B.S. in Ministry/Bible at Amridge University and a Masters of Religious Education in Missional Leadership (MREML) from Rochester University and is doctoral candidate for the Doctorate of Ministry in Contextual Theology at Northern Seminary. The focus of his work is to answer the question, how does a theology of hospitality grounded in the doctrine of the trinity become an essential ecclesial posture if a congregation is to embrace the socially displaced in a racialized cultural system?