

ANDERSON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Cultivating Justice

AN INTRODUCTORY ANALYSIS OF PEACE,
RECONCILIATION, AND WHITE PRIVILEGE
FOR THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

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Introduction

Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a *new naming*.

—Paulo Freire¹

Diversity is not only a celebration, but a struggle. At least this is the sentiment of many who have found most celebrations of diversity within our institutions to be fleeting. My impetus for beginning with this somewhat provocative statement stems from my experience of being white and male while dealing critically with my social location. As a participant in the Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process, the initial difficulty of uncovering and dismantling internalized racism was difficult for many of us in the group who understood ourselves to be strong proponents of peace and reconciliation. Damascus Road is a two and a half day Anabaptist anti-racism and skill development program designed to provide space for both individual transformation and long-term change for faith-based institutions.² I was on pastoral staff at Bluffton University, and the training was offered on campus during my first semester in the fall of 2008. Subsequent reflection and experience has brought me to a deeper awareness of my history as an inheritor and benefactor of white privilege, a participant in the exploitation of

¹ Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007), 79.

² Mennonite Central Committee, “Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process,” <http://us.mcc.org/antiracism/damascusroad> [accessed November 1, 2009].

marginalized people groups, and a sustainer of internalized white oppression. Such piercing realities hardly feel like the average institutional campaign to “celebrate diversity” that encourages a “can’t we all just get along” mentality.

While the abolition of overt oppressive power can be a significant victory, this essay will explore the conviction that our most critical mass of racism continues to stir deep within our individual psyche and institutional systems. My working definition of white privilege will be “a special advantage or benefit of white persons; with reference to divine dispensations, natural advantages, gifts of fortune, genetic endowments, and social relations.”³ I hope to eventually support my claim that radical solidarity with marginalized communities is essential if we are to hear the gospel, “be the church,” and find Christ in the gift of the *other* that cultivates true *otherness* in Christian community. The church must *be the church* if it is to be a witness to God’s upside-down peace in the midst of our world’s systems of domination. Recall the initial comment on struggling with, not only celebrating diversity. I wonder, for instance, if the call to be radical disciples of Jesus is the call to instead *celebrate* in the *midst* of struggle? I wonder if the liberating life of radical solidarity may sustain us, as we become the kind of people who have *eyes to see* and *ears to hear* the Kingdom of God breaking into our world.

Whiteness and Blackness: A Brief History

A disdain for dark skin, or *blackness*, has grown “deep historical and cultural roots that many trace to the early battles in ancient India of the 1500s B.C.E. between the Aryas—the original light-skinned invaders and conquerors of the Northwest Territory . . .

³ Vernellia Randall, “Race, Racism, and the Law: Speaking Truth to Power,” University of Dayton, <http://academic.udayton.edu/race/01race/whiteness05.htm> [accessed November 1, 2009]

and the Dasas or Dasyu—the original dark-skinned inhabitants.”⁴ Later, the ancient Greek and Roman culture looked upon the dark-skinned people of Egypt and Ethiopia with “curiosity, carnality, and negativity.”⁵ A significant problem that began to emerge was the ethnocentric universal claims made by early Western anthropologists coupled with an assumed objectivity.⁶ Much later, in the fifteenth century, one of the largest-scale systematic injustices of modern recorded history became a reality. Robert E. Hood uses Pope Nicholas V to portray the collective sentiment of the west towards *blackness* in the time of the African Slave Trade in the following excerpt from *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions on Blacks and Blackness*:

Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455) no doubt reflected both Western cultural and religious views of blackness of his day in his special 1454 papal bull that ceded all of Africa to Portugal, which was the pioneer Western country creating the market of slave trading as a commercial venture. The bull ensured indulgences in heaven for enslaving and baptizing the black Africans, who were to be liberated from paganism and superstition and brought to the light of the Christian faith.⁷

Western culture has continued to operate under many of the same presuppositions that drove leaders and their people into a collective approval of human slavery. Even current studies show a striking inequality between *whiteness* and *blackness*.

The reality of white privilege in contemporary western culture keeps a lower profile while still permeating our relationships and white institutions. “According to Directorship Databank, 94.7 percent of the 7,162 directors of the 786 largest public

⁴ Robert E. Hood, *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions On Blacks and Blackness* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1994), 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

companies in the United States are white men.”⁸ Princeton University also released a study with the NYC Commission on Human Rights concluding that white job applicants with criminal records were more likely to receive an employment offer than black applicants with no prison record.⁹ Furthermore, the Death Penalty Information Center released these statistics in 2007 regarding the number of persons executed for interracial murders since 1976: White defendant/Black victim – 15; Black defendant/White victim – 213.¹⁰ Behind each statistic is an institution founded on, and sustained by, white privilege. While the statistics are striking, even more is the realization of who is in control of creating them. Thus, in an interconnected web of relationships and structures, we must seek to reflect on both our individual behavior and our institutional realities as it relates to our Christian life together.

Being White: Persons and Institutions

The church must learn time and time again that its task is not to *make* the world the kingdom, but to be faithful to the kingdom by showing to the world a community of peace.

—Stanley Hauerwas,¹¹

Indeed, one purpose of this essay is to engage in imagining and becoming a truly multi-cultural, transnational Christian Church. Awakening imagination and cultivating virtues necessary to witness to the crucified God is fundamental, I think, to any fruitful

⁸ *Damascus Road Anti-Racism Process: Antiracism Analysis Workbook* (Akron: Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Anti-Racism Program), 1.7. To inquire about Damascus Road Workshops and Workbooks see <http://antiracism.mcc.org/us/antiracism/contact/> [accessed November 6, 2009].

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.7.

¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, ed. John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 379.

Christian practice. The danger comes in our pursuit of cultivating racial justice when we participate in the celebration of friendly diverse relationships while failing to address the ways our individual behavior and institutional systems have continued to internalize *whiteness* as the normative human experience. On the second day of the anti-Racism process, a group exercise revealed a striking conclusion about what it means to *be white*. The room was divided into two. On one side sat people of color. On the other side, white people. Each group was asked the same question with a relevant qualifier. First, to us, the question was “What do you *like* about being white?” Simply speaking the question out loud in diverse company was enough to unsettle our group of white participants. Eventually, the answers given included the following: being accepted without question, having access and agency when needed, being trusted without suspicion, and being granted a general sense of freedom. When asked, “What do you like about being people of color?” the group fluidly responded with answers including family, musical tradition, cultural food, heritage, and togetherness. The contrast was striking. While the responses by people of color portrayed community and historical familial bonds, the very existence of white culture, as portrayed by the white group, was completely dependent on power and privilege. Furthermore, this power and privilege proved to breed individualism and thus the breakdown of community life. Access, agency, trust, and freedom are all fundamentally individual in nature and encourage autonomy over obedience.

Furthermore, internalized privilege does not allow us to see the other as truly human. For instance, when a white person describes a local crime to a friend he/she might comment, “Did you see the black man who was arrested for domestic abuse?” or

“Did you see the Latino family arrested for gang violence?” Also, notice the qualifier of “Muslim extremist” attached to the Fort Hood gunman before evidence of any organized motive was conclusive. Now, try to recall a time when a U.S. news report headline read “White Male Christian Commits Murder.” Our qualifiers, while used to describe the *other*, are absent when describing the acts of those who identify with the American white race. Though we might be inclined to think these words are merely descriptive, over time the generalized race is associated with the crime. Thus, white persons of privilege internalize the notion that something about being black, Latino, or Muslim makes one a violent criminal, while never questioning the thought of being white and Christian as a cause for crime.

It is this very culture, as culture does, that cultivates certain virtues of complacency and self-gratification needed to sustain the white race through power and privilege. Though we have learned in many ways how to be politically correct and polite in our face-to-face interactions, I would argue that our thoughts and internal struggles are the seedbed where cultural racism begins to make a home in us. Perhaps you can hear echoes of the “You have heard it said” statements from the Sermon on the Mount that emphasize the link between our thoughts and our character (Mt. 5:1-89).

Though the overarching Biblical narrative will speak strongly against oppression, this dichotomy of *whiteness* and *blackness* permeates our faith stories. Recall the Biblical account of creation. “Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:3-4).¹² Hood points out correctly here that the entire Biblical narrative is infused

¹² All Scriptural references are from the *New Revised Standard Version*.

with light/dark metaphor. Consistently, Hood writes, darkness or *blackness* is associated with “gloom, woe, darkness, dread, death, terror, horror, wickedness, mourning, defilement, annihilation” while lightness or *whiteness* is associated with “triumph, light, innocence, joy, purity, regeneration, happiness, gaiety, peace, femininity, delicacy.”¹³ These observations not only affirm Hood’s convictions, but also reveal the way in which western privileged persons and institutions have internalized *white* as normative since these metaphors are often overlooked when looking through privileged lenses.

What must happen, then, when we are awakened to our own deeply embedded internalized racism? As followers of Jesus, we must cultivate the necessary virtues in order to hear, tell, and embody the good news. If we are to take the words of Jesus seriously, then it is among the oppressed in our world that we may find the Holy One. We do this together, welcoming the stranger as a gift, no matter who that stranger may be, for it is in the otherness of God that Jesus said, “I was a stranger, and you welcomed me” (Mt. 25:35). We do this together, I would argue, through a deep love of self that is essential if we are to love our neighbor. While guilt must not be skipped over too quickly, and be nurtured in the context of worship, many essays on white privilege and racism run the risk of driving white people further into crippling guilt that becomes another kind of bondage. Instead, I would argue the very nature of self-doubt is at the core of our internalized racism. Being liberated from our need to define others as inferior to ourselves shows true confidence not only in our own belovedness, but the God that works in us and through us to reconcile the world through a community of peace. This

¹³ Hood, *Begrimed and Black: Christian Traditions On Blacks and Blackness*, 2.

process, as Christians, involves deconstructing the status quo readings of Scripture to uncover the subversive Jesus of the New Testament.

Reinterpreting Privileged Readings of the Text

A theology of blessing for the well-off “haves” is very different from a theology of salvation for the precarious “have-nots.” Obviously the well-off do not expect their faith to begin in a cry but rather in a song. They do not expect or need intrusion, but they rejoice in stability. They do not crave an upheaval—a discontinuity—such as a “mighty saving deed,” but they celebrate the solidarity of continuity, which means the durability of a world and a social order that have been beneficial to them.

—Walter Brueggemann¹⁴

Much work has been done to more deeply understand the way our own cultural context shapes us not only into the kind of people we are, but the kind of world we interact with. As Christians we can say we are “people of the book.” Thus, we must ask ourselves how our own white privilege plays a role in our biblical interpretation. Though this discussion is not fundamentally about the source of authority in Scripture, the question of meaning comes to the forefront. How do we derive *meaning* from the text? Furthermore, how does our social location affect our interpretation of the text and how does that interpretation transform or legitimize our presuppositions about God, our world, and ourselves? In Stanley Fish’s book entitled *Is There A Text In This Class*, he provocatively suggests that “the reader’s response is not *to* the meaning, but *is* the

¹⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Living Toward A Vision: Biblical Reflections On Shalom* (New York: United Church Press, 1982), 31.

meaning” of the text.¹⁵ Simply put, Fish argues there are no text, but only readers of the text. Theologians take the question of Scriptural authority and meaning seriously, and some are willing to adopt Fish’s sentiments more than others. Wherever you fall on the spectrum, however, we can all agree—I hope—that our cultural context deeply affects our tendency to understand Scripture through white privileged eyes.

Consider the parable of Jesus commonly referred to as “The Parable of the Talents” found in the gospel of Matthew. In summary, a landowner leaves to go on a journey and entrusts three of his slaves to a portion of his wealth. The first is given five talents, the second is given two, and the third is given one. While the first two slaves invested their loan and made a two-fold profit, the third slave dug a hole and buried his talent in the sand. The Master returned, showing his affirmation of the first two slaves by putting them “in charge of many things” (Mt. 25:23). The third slave, who buried his talent in the ground, confessed to the slave master saying “I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow” (Mt. 25:24). After being scolded for not investing the talent, an example is made of him. The master says, “to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away” (Mt. 25:29).

The traditional interpretation of this story heard in most middle-class western protestant churches goes something like this: the slave owner is God, and the slaves are God’s people. God blesses the people according to their gifts, the people are given the charge to be “good stewards” of their gifts and resources, and the people who invest well and are successful will be granted more blessing from God. The third slave is looked

¹⁵ Stanley fish, *Is There A Text In This Class: The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), 3.

upon as what *not* to be, while the first two become quintessential obedient children of God. This reading, I argue, conforms to the systems of privilege in western contemporary culture while failing to be a witness to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

In contrast to this interpretation, William H. Herzog II seeks to uncover the closely connected cultural elements as a foundation for interpretation. First century Palestine was organized on three levels: the household, the city, and the kingdom.¹⁶ The household was home to the elite where wealth was harvested, gathered, redistributed, and exported. The economic system could be understood as a single pie. Unlike the assumptions of contemporary capitalistic societies, 1st century Palestine could not create an unlimited amount of pies. On the contrary, the more pie you owned, the less pie remained for the rest. Thus, the accumulation of wealth was fundamentally tied to exploitation.

Often, as we see in this parable, the slave owners would go on a journey with the intension of expanding his estate through oppressive means. When the elite would go on a journey, he would always leave a portion of his wealth with his most trusted servants to invest and turn profits.¹⁷ This often resulted into the entrusted slaves using similar techniques of exploitation. It is at this point, that Herzog transforms the title from “The Parable of the Talents” to “The Vulnerability of the Whistle-Blower.”¹⁸ The third slave, Herzog suggests, was unjustly labeled “lazy” by his master. Instead, we find explicitly in

¹⁶ William H. Herzog, *Parables As Subversive Speech: Jesus As Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: West Minster John Knox Press, 1994), 161.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 150-171.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 150-171.

the confession of the third servant that he was aware of the oppressive system he was being asked to participate in. One could say he had *eyes to see* and *ears to hear* the seductive manipulation in the master saying to the other servants, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave” (Mt. 25:23). The investment was for the master’s expansion of wealth at the expensive of day laborers and the peasant class. The act of burying the talent in the sand thus ceases to be an act of laziness, poor investment, or cause for punishment but instead an act of liberation and picture of God’s Kingdom. The third slave was refusing to participate in the chain of exploitation handed down to him from the elite. He was indeed a whistle blower.

Such a different interpretation has profound implications for many white churches. If we see God in the third slave, then our goal is to follow as prophetic witnesses to a radical trust in the God who is free and for the freedom of the oppressed. At the close of the parable, recall, the third slave was cast out. The Lukan account of the parable even tells of the master murdering the servant for burying his talent (Lk. 19:27). We know this story well. When the marginalized expose the falsities of the powerful, they are put to death; even on a cross. Certainly, The underlying spirit behind this upside-down interpretation must extend beyond this story and permeate the way we think through, prepare for, and carry out the adventurous task of the entire mission of Christian Life.

A Critique of Privileged Christian Mission

If the real Church is the people of God, whose primary task is that of being Christ to the world by proclaiming the message of the gospel (*kerygma*), by rendering services of liberation (*diakonia*), and by being itself a manifestation of the nature

of the new society (*koinonia*), then the empirical institutionalized white church has failed on all counts.

—James H. Cone¹⁹

Many Christians debate different philosophies of evangelism, or “sharing the good news.” While we can point to current and historical downfalls of past evangelistic efforts, we may all still agree the gospel is, in fact, *good news*. What then does Racism have to do with evangelism? Isn’t the good news *good* in itself? Herein lies an important tension where we must live faithfully. The gospel cannot exist in a vacuum. That is, each person who decides to evangelize is doing so in a particular cultural and historical context that makes her/him a benefit of privilege or victim of injustice.

Before I go any further, we must reflect on the implications of the gospel’s *goodness* as it relates to the status of privilege. A traditional Christian claim addresses Jesus’ divinity by saying the “word became flesh.” By proclaiming this reality, Christ is recognized as the embodiment of God among us. Thus, we can learn to become more fully human by watching the humanity of Jesus who we call Lord. How did God break into history through the incarnation? This question can lead us to the answer we are looking for in the evangelism/racism discussion.

As a poor person, born into a poor family, living in solidarity with the oppressed as an oppressed person, Jesus’ social location should have profound implications for Christians as we make sense of the world we live in. What does this suggest, for instance, about God’s relationship to power? Wealth? Control? If Jesus is Lord, and Christ entered the world oppressed in opposition to the Empire, then an awareness of privilege

¹⁹ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969), 71.

and willingness to be displaced to the margins is essential to hearing and embodying the gospel.

This fundamental argument regarding our faith stories is helpful to understanding the relationship between evangelism and Racism. Recall the claim that all persons who evangelize are caught up in a particular cultural and historical context. Many times evangelism is carried out by the privileged to the victims of injustice, the powerful to the powerless, without self-criticism on the side of the powerful. The self, that is, that benefits from systems and structures that exploit the other. Our assumptions that white European experience is normative does not demand us to question the way our evangelism can turn into coercive, oppressive relationships that push the marginalized further into dependence and dehumanization. We can certainly see this in the extreme cases of Colonialism, but if we are truly taking seriously the internalization of privilege, we must also take seriously the ways racial injustice is sustained and even deepened through seemingly harmless evangelistic efforts. If privileged communities teach evangelism without first seeking displacement through racial reconciliation, can the mindset of “chosen people” become a legitimization of privilege and therefore fail to cultivate the posture of learner to, and servant among, victims of injustice? At stake here is not only broken relationships, but also a bastardization of the gospel that does not transform us to be more like Christ and thus communicates a spiritualized Jesus on the side of the powerful. Furthermore, it misinterprets profound insights within the text.

Recall what some label the *Jesus manifesto* in the gospel according to Luke where Jesus proclaims he “came to bring good news to the poor.” By *poor* here, I interpret Jesus to mean any victim of injustice since the economic system demanded wealth be

gained through exploitation. Jean Vanier, in his short book *From Brokenness to Community*, makes an important distinction in this passage. He writes, “Jesus came to bring good news to the poor, not to those who serve the poor.”²⁰ The suggestion here is privileged persons go to first *hear*, not *proclaim*, the good news from victims of injustice.

This doesn’t say that privileged persons cannot proclaim the good news, but that privileged persons must be displaced before the gospel can be heard. I would suggest that discomfort felt as a result of this comment partly originates from a deeply internalized distrust of marginalized persons and communities. As I have built relationships in Uganda for the past three years, I have become acutely aware of my privileged impulses to *fix* and *control*. I remember the first day I visited an African home of a single mother living with AIDS with two children. My immediate reaction urgently searched for a way to *fix* the *problem* before I had heard anything about what the problem *really* was. While I sat with my Ugandan sisters and brothers who spoke with gentleness and patience, I started to realize the very nature of the gospel in simply *being* together. It was a lesson in radical solidarity. There was no heroic mighty saving deed being done, but a commitment to stand with and learn from the oppressed. This transformation that started in Uganda through learning to trust the other deeply affected the way I re-interpreted myself in my own social location. In Christian mission, I found, white privileged persons travel a seductive road where the same internalized desire to keep our privilege becomes the same spirit that drives our desire to do intercultural service. Therefore, solidarity must live in the practice of mutual trust and responsibility led by the marginalized if we are to structurally dismantle the brokenness of white privilege. The Jesus who told peter

²⁰ Jean Vanier, *From Brokenness To Community* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1992), 32.

to put away the sword, and said “blessed are the poor,” must be allowed to shape us into faithful witnesses, willing to become the kind of people who say: “there is no greater love than this, than to lay down your life for your friends” (Jn. 15:13).

Conclusion: Then Who Shall We Be?

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation;

—2 Corinthians 5:16-19 (NRSV)

At this point, I have discussed the ways in which the destructively pervasive effects of internalized white privilege still controls much of our institutional and individual behavior. As Christians, the lens through which we view our world has profound implications for individual behavior, institutional leadership, theological reflection, and the Christian life of service. Hopefully, I have provided a convincing argument that if we are to hear and become like Christ we must first seek radical solidarity with the oppressed in authentic partnerships *led by* the oppressed. This solidarity must start with a cultivation of radical trust in God who is free and for the freedom of oppressed. Then, trust in the *other* can be born, a new culture of hospitality that welcomes the stranger as a gift.

Leaders of the Church must not miss this critical invitation. The middle-class white church specifically has found itself in quite a predicament. Each church’s institutional survival is dependent on the generosity of the congregation. Many church leaders find it difficult to fight the temptation of creating an atmosphere where the comfort of those who give financially is most important. Thus, the culture that is created

is one that welcomes and affirms privilege, while sending this subtle message to people of color: just as you are marginalized in the world, you are marginalized inside the church. It is possible to see here how an institution takes on its own spirit that is more than the sum of its parts. Hope, however, is not lost. Walter Wink offers an honest yet optimistic critique of institutions in his book *The Powers That Be: Theology For a New Millennium* when he writes that institutional powers are “good creations of God, are fallen, and can be redeemed.”²¹

For Christians, internalized privilege need not be the last word about who we are, who God is, and what this life is about. Still the Biblical narrative portrays a God that transcends boundaries and becomes who God needs to become in order to stand in solidarity with the world’s most oppressed persons. Still the Biblical narrative tells us we are made in the image of this God. Thus, the followers of Jesus are a displaced people, drawn to the Christ whose body was broken for the future hope of a humanity ruled by love.

It is true the Church is difficult. It is also true, that in the midst of difficulty, hope can be found. The Christian Church *can* be the church by dismantling the dominant paradigms of complacency and re-awakening an imagination capable of turning our everyday universe upside-down. Simple questions can begin the liberating process. Can we *imagine* justice? Can we *imagine* peace?

Seeking authentic relationships with victims of injustice led by victims of injustice does not provide us an ethical roadmap, and it is true this effort may be one more step in the slippery slope of identifying persons solely by the social construct of

²¹ Walter Wink, *The Powers That Be: Theology For A New Millennium* (New York: Double Day, 1998), 36.

race. Thus, cultivating virtues necessary to hearing, telling, and embodying the gospel of Jesus must be nurtured together. The account of the spirit's fruit in Galatians reveals virtues worth of cultivation in the Christian life, but the virtues fundamentally necessary to hearing, telling, and embodying the good news are *hope* and *patience*. Consider this excerpt from Stanly Hauerwas in his book *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic*:

We are thus sustained by hope that the adventure of living virtuously will be worth the risk. Hope thus forms every virtue, for without hope the virtuous cannot help but be ruled by despair. But hope without patience results in the illusion of optimism or, more terrifying, the desperation of fanaticism. The hope necessary to initiate us into the adventure must be schooled by patience if the adventure is to be sustained. . . . Yet patience equally requires hope, for without hope patience too easily accepts the world and the self for what it is rather than what it can or should be.²²

Hauerwas offers an intriguing dichotomy that reveals the nature of discipleship. It is by the radical trust in the God who is free and for the freedom of the oppressed that we surrender our control. This act, therefore, is an act that is sustained through *patience* and *hope*. Naming and shaping is a process of cultivation and liberation. Thus, we must not jump to displacement all at once, for it is only in the community of hope and patience that we can understand what it means to be rooted in the biblical imagination while displacing ourselves from privilege. In the process, we “become a history” and figure out “who we really are.”²³ People of hope. People of patience. People, looking to the God who is free and for the freedom of the oppressed to empower us as participants in the “naming and shaping of our world.”²⁴ Let us pray “thy kingdom come” as collective peacemakers,

²² Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 127-128.

²³ *Ibid.*, 43.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 43.

walking faithfully together, celebrating our beauty and mourning our brokenness, all in hopes that “the adventure of living virtuously will be worth the risk.”²⁵ Let us hear the good news that Jesus took to the oppressed, and find the imagination of God’s empowering Kingdom in the *other*. Let us be faithful to this Kingdom, through a “community of peace.”²⁶

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²⁵ Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: toward a constructive Christian social ethic*, 127-128.

²⁶ Hauerwas, *The Hauerwas Reader*, 379.

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