A GOSPEL FOR YUPPIE NEW YORKERS?
THE WHITENESS IN TIM KELLER'S EVANGELICAL MESSAGE
AT REDEEMER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Division of Religion,

Drew University in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Committee Chair:

J. Terry Todd, Associate Professor of American Religious Studies

Stephen J. Wolma

Drew University
Madison, New Jersey

March 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

The ministry of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in

New York City was one of the most significant developments within twentieth-century

evangelicalism in the United States. Starting in 1989 with a core group of around a dozen,

Keller grew Redeemer over the next couple decades into a multi-site megachurch in which

thousands met for worship in multiple locations on the Upper West and Upper East Sides of

Manhattan. Keller tailored his ministry to attract young urban professionals who came to

New York City in the late twentieth century to "make it" in their careers, and his success in

drawing them into the worship at Redeemer in such large numbers was unprecedented.

Keller targeted these young urban professionals, because he believed they were the key to

accessing the cultural influence of New York City. Yet the majority of people who attended

Redeemer's worship services were middle- to upper-class whites. Therefore, Keller

inadvertently linked his drive to increase the cultural influence of his evangelical brand

with gathering in a large, white, middle- to upper-class following.

Keller's ministry was not the only instance of this linkage within twentieth-century

evangelicalism in the United States. Through a socio-historical analysis, I was able to place

Keller within a long line of white, twentieth-century evangelical leaders who worked

tirelessly to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand. Through a content

analysis of Keller's sermons at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, it became clear that Keller's

evangelical brand, much like that of his white evangelical predecessors, reflected the

prevailing racialized social order. This insatiable drive for increased cultural influence for a

particular evangelical brand and the resulting complicity of that evangelical brand with the

racialized social order were two defining characteristics that recurred within major

evangelical ministries throughout the twentieth century.

My aim in this dissertation is not simply to show how Keller's ministry was shaped

by these two defining characteristics. It is also to name the reality that, in spite of their best

intentions, Keller and other white evangelical leaders of the twentieth century allowed

their evangelical brands to become complicit with maintaining and reinforcing the

racialized social order, and ultimately white supremacy, within the United States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation came to fruition through the efforts of several people. I would like to thank my dissertation committee, Dr. J. Terry Todd, Dr. Laurel Kearns, and Dr. Javier Viera. All three of these scholars encouraged and challenged me throughout this process with their thought-provoking insights and generative conversations. Particularly, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. J. Terry Todd. His careful and incisive feedback was critical to making this a coherent and cogent project.

My friends and family also provided life-giving support for me during this project, particularly in those moments when it seemed like this dissertation would never come together. My parents-in-law, E.J. Thomas and Pam Thomas, and my brother-in-law, Bobby Orr, gave up their limited and valuable leisure time to proofread and comment on drafts of the chapters of this dissertation. Thank you, E.J., Pam, and Bobby! Without your efforts I would have never been able to complete this dissertation on time.

My children, Chloe and Jonathan Wolma, endured with patience my absence during the many hours I was working on this dissertation and my being distracted with thoughts of this dissertation when we were able to spend time together. Chloe and Jonathan, you have been so understanding through this process and are growing up to be such incredible people. I am grateful and humbled to be your father.

My life partner, Leah Thomas, served as a constant source of inspiration as I grappled with this project. Her thoughtful suggestions, keen perspective, and close editing pushed me to be a more precise and thorough writer than I ever thought I could be. In spite of teaching new classes as the Visiting Professor of Pastoral Theology at Lancaster Theological Seminary and working on revisions for her own forthcoming book, Leah

graciously managed our household so that I had the time and space to finish this project. Leah, your unyielding emotional support carried me through this uneven journey. The persistent warmth and magnanimous grandeur of your spirit continually amaze me, and I count myself the luckiest of the lucky to be able to spend my life with you.

Although they did not live to see me finish this dissertation, my parents, Thomas and Marilyn Wolma, stood by me every step of the way. Though they have been gone for over five years, I sense them standing by me even now.

Finally, I want to thank the One who called me through the writing of this dissertation to think more deeply and prayerfully about what it means to preach the Good News.

INTRODUCTION

The Astonishing Success of Keller's Ministry

The ministry of the Rev. Dr. Timothy Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City was one of the most astonishing developments within U.S. evangelicalism during the late twentieth century. After graduating from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in 1975 and being ordained in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA), Keller served as the pastor of a church located in a small, blue-collar town in rural Virginia.[1] He completed a Doctor of Ministry degree at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1981 and was invited to join the faculty as a professor of practical theology in 1984.[2] Five years later, Keller left his secure position as a professor for the risky venture of starting a church in New York City. Keller chose center city Manhattan, meaning the section from 96th Street to the Financial District, as the ministry area for the new church. Working with a core group of around a dozen people, Keller settled on the name Redeemer Presbyterian Church and held the first worship service close to the Easter holiday in 1989. Later that year, 250 were showing up at Redeemer's worship services and by the following fall the number of attendees had risen to 600. Over the next couple decades, Redeemer expanded into a multi-site megachurch that met for worship in multiple locations on the Upper West and Upper East Sides of Manhattan. When Keller retired in 2017, approximately 5,000 attended weekly worship services.[3]

---

[1] Rudolph Tucker Bartholomew, III, "Reviving Orthodoxy: A Study of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City" (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2000), 60; Tim Stafford, "How Tim Keller Found Manhattan," *Christianity Today* (June 2009), 20. The PCA should not be confused with the Presbyterian Church of the United States of America (PCUSA). The PCA is the more theologically conservative of the two, as evidenced by their prohibition of same-sex marriage and women serving as ordained pastors.

[2] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 60.

[3] The sources for these numbers are at Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 24 and Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 48.

Redeemer became an umbrella organization that housed several other ministries alongside of Redeemer Presbyterian Church, including a counseling center (Redeemer Counseling), an outreach organization that addressed social needs (Hope for New York), and a church planter training program (Redeemer City to City).[4] During the early twenty-first century, Keller's success inspired dozens of evangelical pastors to leave their comfortable ministries in other parts of the United States to start new churches in New York City using Keller's church planting techniques. Each of Keller's sermons was recorded and made available through Redeemer's Gospel in Life Ministry,[5] extending Keller's influence far beyond the auditoriums where his audience gathered for Sunday worship. During his tenure at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Keller also wrote over twenty books, two of which, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (2008) and *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God* (2011), were bestsellers and remain enormously popular with evangelicals both in New York City and across the nation.

The location of Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church within New York City made his success and influence all the more astonishing. In the late 1980s, center city Manhattan seemed like a particularly hostile place to launch a new evangelical church. Only 7 percent of the residents of center city Manhattan indicated attending a Protestant Church, with less than 1 percent of them self-identifying as evangelicals.[6] At that time many

---

[4] Each of these are listed under the "Ministries" tab on Redeemer's website, https://www.redeemer.com, accessed on March 26, 2019. Each of these ministries also has its own website as follows: Redeemer Counseling Services, https://counseling.redeemer.com, accessed on March 26, 2019; Hope for New York, https://www.hfny.org, accessed on March 26, 2019; Redeemer City to City, https://www.redeemercitytocity.com, accessed on March 26, 2019.

[5] Gospel in Life, https://gospelinlife.com, accessed on March 26, 2019.

[6] Terry Mattingly, "After 9-11, Evangelicals Heart New York: A Faith-Shaped Trend That Has Quietly Emerged in the Big Apple in the Decades Since the Twin Towers Fell," *A Journey Through NYC Religions*, September 21,

evangelicals had written New York City off as little more than a place of urban pathologies. The dazzling diversity and fierce secularity of New York City prompted the perception that the evangelical faith could not withstand living amid these countervailing spiritual forces. Not many gave Keller's vision to start a new church in this hostile territory much chance of succeeding.[7] Not only did Keller prove them wrong, in the process Keller's ministry became one of the most influential within U.S. evangelicalism during the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By doing what many thought was impossible, Keller's ministry caught the attention of evangelicals across the country. Keller's willingness to risk the spiritual peril of New York City paid immense dividends. He unlocked the city's great potential to parlay the influence of his ministry well beyond its borders.

Keller's Ministry Shaped By Two Defining Characteristics

Keller's ability to gather crowds of young urban professionals into the worship services at Redeemer Presbyterian Church further elevated the prominence of his ministry within late twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States. A financial services boom began in New York City in the 1980s and lasted into the 1990s. This boom attracted ambitious young professionals to move to New York City in droves to pursue careers as bankers, lawyers, and business and media executives. These "yuppies" came to New York City for the primary purpose of securing lucrative careers for themselves.[8] In "A New Kind

---

2011, http://www.nycreligion.info/911-evangelicals-heart-york/. See also Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church," The Gospel Coalition, May 22, 2017, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/life-and-times-of-redeemer-presbyterian-church; Tim Keller, "An Evangelical Mission in a Secular City," in *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, ed., Lyle E. Schaller (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 31.

[7] See Zylstra, "Life and Times," in which she indicates that New York evangelical insiders did not give Keller much of a chance of lasting more than 5 years.

[8] "Yuppies" is a term that was coined in the early 1980s to refer to "young urban professionals" who were employed in financial centers like New York City. D. Rutherford, "yuppie, yuppy," *Routledge Dictionary of Economics*, 3rd Edition (London: Routledge 2013),

of Urban Christian," Keller explained how he crafted his preaching to reach these young urban professionals.[9] To borrow a phrase from *New York Magazine's* Joseph Hooper, Keller started the ministry at Redeemer to save these influential young urban professionals' "yuppie souls."[10] By the mid-1990s, Redeemer Presbyterian Church had already actualized Keller's vision to reach out to these migratory young urban professionals. The weekly worship attendees consisted predominantly of single adults in their 20s and 30s. Almost all of them pursued some level of college education and just under half had taken up graduate studies. Hardly any were born in New York City and barely one-third had lived there for more than 10 years. Almost two-thirds worked as professionals in the fields of education, medicine, law, advertising, finance, and banking.[11] Gathering in such large numbers of young urban professionals was a breathtaking victory. Keller considered New York City to be one of the most (if not *the* most) strategically significant cities in the United States in that it offered the ability to multiply the cultural influence of his evangelical brand throughout the entire United States. Keller viewed these young urban professionals as the key to accessing the cultural influence of New York City and his success in reaching out to them was unparalleled within U.S. evangelicalism at that time.

Yet a closer look at the demographics of who was attending Redeemer's worship services prompts reconsideration of what was happening with Keller's ministry. The white and Asian populations consistently were the largest racial groups at Redeemer's worship

---

http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/routsobk/yuppie_yuppy/0?institutionId=1119.

[9] Tim Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," *Christianity Today* (May 2006), 36-37.

[10] Joseph Hooper, "Tim Keller Wants to Save Your Yuppie Soul," *New York Magazine*, November 9, 2009, at http://nymag.com/news/features/62374/.

[11] These demographics were provided through an ethnography of Redeemer conducted by Tuck Bartholomew. See Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 78-79.

services.[12] Over three-fourths of the worship attendees had been to a Protestant worship service within the previous ten years and over two-thirds had been raised going to Protestant worship services. More than two-thirds indicated an annual income of higher than $25,000, and almost one-third reported an annual income of more than $50,000.[13] This means the young urban professionals attending Redeemer's worship services were mostly middle- to upper-class whites or Asians with some background in Protestant Christianity. Although not the intention when starting Redeemer Presbyterian Church, many of the young urban professionals who came to Redeemer's worship services were evangelicals who found Redeemer to be devoted to making the faith of their upbringing appealing as they were living and pursuing their careers in New York City.[14]

By targeting young urban professionals as the key to accessing the cultural influence offered through New York City, Keller's ministry also inadvertently prioritized gathering in a white, middle- to upper-class population amid the dazzling diversity of New York City. Keller's ministry then exhibited a link between his drive to increase the cultural influence of his evangelical brand and garnering a white, middle- to upper-class following as the key to achieving this cultural influence. None of my research suggests that Keller intended for this linkage to occur, but rather that Keller's ministry was not the only instance of this linkage within twentieth-century evangelicalism. Keller's ministry can be understood as an iteration within a pattern that was repeated throughout twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States in general and New York City in particular.

---

[12] Tim Keller, "Tim Keller on Churches and Race," Video Interview, posted by Big Think, accessed April 11, 2017, http://bigthink.com/videos/tim-keller-on-churches-and-race.
[13] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 78-79.
[14] Tony Carnes, "Religions in the City: An Overview," in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, eds. Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 11.

Through a socio-historical analysis, I have identified two defining characteristics that are present in any era of twentieth-century evangelicalism. First, evangelical leaders displayed an insatiable drive to expand the influence of their evangelical brand within U.S. society. This drive issued not from a simple will-to-power, but rather from a fear that the United States was being corrupted by a moral degeneracy that would inevitably lead, if left unchecked, to a chaotic social breakdown. By increasing the cultural influence of their evangelical brand, these evangelical leaders hoped to save the soul of U.S. culture within their historical context. Second, these evangelical leaders gathered in white, middle- to upper-class audiences as a means of expanding the cultural influence for their evangelical brand. As a consequence of maintaining their connection with these white, middle- to upper-class audiences, these evangelical leaders allowed their evangelical brand to reflect the racialized social order of the United States. Generally, these evangelical leaders did not intend to reflect the racialized social order through their evangelical brand and were not even aware that this was happening.

My analysis engaged with Keller's ministry as a case study within this repeating pattern. First, through a socio-historical analysis of twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States in general, and New York City in particular, I was able to place Keller within a long line of white, twentieth-century evangelical leaders who worked tirelessly to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand. Second, through a content analysis of Keller's preaching at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, it became clear that Keller's evangelical brand, much like his white evangelical predecessors, reflected the racialized social order. My point in this dissertation is not simply to show how Keller's ministry was shaped by these two defining characteristics within U.S. evangelicalism. It is also to name

the reality that , in spite of their best intentions, Keller and other white evangelical leaders of the twentieth century allowed their evangelical brands to become complicit with maintaining and reinforcing white supremacy within the United States.

Defining Evangelicalism and Racialized Social Order

Two key terms are integral to the analysis in this dissertation, namely "evangelicalism" and "racialized social order." As the meanings for these terms are neither obvious nor settled, each of them must be clearly defined here at the outset.

For purposes of this dissertation, "evangelicalism" refers to a religious movement in which people have two basic commitments. First, evangelicals hold to traditional Protestant theology, which can be distilled to the following general beliefs: (1) the Bible is the final authority for religious belief and practice; (2) the Bible has recorded the historical events of God's saving work; (3) salvation comes from Jesus' atonement for sin on the cross; (4) a personal relationship with Jesus is required to receive this salvation; and (5) believers are supposed to encourage others to seek salvation through Jesus as well. Second, evangelicals seek to be proactively engaged in the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of the United States. This outward engagement has taken many forms, but in all epochs of the twentieth-century evangelicals have consistently attempted to gain greater influence within these various spheres of U.S. society.

Evangelicalism has also been a contested category throughout the twentieth century. Differing evangelical factions competed with each other to define who qualified as a "true" evangelical. At stake in this competition was the ability to amass a large enough following to engender a particular faction with the social power to exert maximal cultural influence for their evangelical brand and, in turn, head off the immorality and secularism

that was corrupting U.S. society. It is also critical to note that this contest to claim the "true"

evangelical brand has been between differing factions of white evangelicals. Throughout

the twentieth century, religious communities of color who held to the same traditional

Protestant theology as white evangelicals were routinely excluded from staking a viable

claim within that contest. The result of this exclusion has been the creation of a hegemonic

definition of evangelicalism that signifies "conservative Christianity, whiteness, and a

specific political affiliation and economic class" while omitting the voices and experiences

of communities of color.[15] This hegemony resurfaced later within the analysis of Keller's

ministry as he too staked a claim for his evangelical brand within this twentieth-century

contest to control who qualified as a "true" evangelical.

Another term used frequently within this analysis of Keller's ministry at Redeemer

Presbyterian Church is "racialized social order." Within this dissertation, "racialized social

order" refers to the assignment of social privileges to different groups based on their race.

The racialized social order was developed in connection with colonization and the slave

trade. To facilitate these endeavors, Europeans, particularly the Dutch, French, and English,

weaponized the category of race. They deemed themselves to be "white" and considered

everyone else to be other than "white." Whites were assigned a higher social status than all

other races, making race a social structure that awarded systemic privileges to whites over

other races. Although eluding fixed definition within critical race theory,[16] whiteness has

---

[15] Tejai Beulah, "Soul Salvation, Social Liberation: Race and Evangelical Christianity in the Black Power Era, 1968-1979," (PhD diss., Drew University, 2018), 13.

[16] Whiteness has eluded fixed definition for the simple reason that, like any other race, whiteness is a socially evolving category that is ever changing. Simon Clarke and Steve Garner, *White Identities: A Critical Sociological Approach* (New York: Pluto Press 2009), 17. The potential breadth of meaning encompassed in "whiteness" is set forth by Haney Lopez's poetic rendering of it as "a social construct, a legal artifact, a function of what people believe, a mutable category tied to particular historical moments, an idea, an evolving group, an unstable identity subject to expansion and contraction, a trope for welcome immigrants, a

generally been thought of as an individual and collective identity that has assigned social power and standing to its possessor and has been associated with retaining power, decision-making, and problem-framing within the social context.[17] Because whites were privileged within the racialized social order unleashed by the Europeans, Bonilla-Silva indicates this racialized social order is synonymous with white supremacy.[18] This racialized social order of white supremacy was implemented globally, affecting all societies where Europeans extended their reach.

The United States is one of these societies. That means from its inception, the racialized social order that promotes white supremacy has been present in U.S. society. This racialized social order has been maintained and reinforced throughout the history of the United States through both legal mandate and social practice.[19] Although the mechanisms that reproduce this racialized social order changed dramatically during the twentieth century, the racialized social order remained a constant presence within U.S. society during that period. This means that Keller's ministry, as well as twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism as a whole, must be analyzed from the perspective that it exists within, and has been affected by, this racialized social order that promotes white supremacy.

mechanism for excluding those of unfamiliar origin, an artifice of social prejudice. Whiteness can be one, all, or any combination of these depending on the setting in which it is deployed. Whiteness is not a biologically defined group, a static taxonomy, a neutral designation of difference, an objective description of immutable traits, a scientifically defensible division of humankind, an accident of nature unmolded by the hands of people." Ian F. Haney Lopez, "White By Law" (1996), in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 779.

[17] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 17.

[18] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States,* 3rd Edition (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2010), 11.

[19] For discussion of how U.S. immigration law reinforced the racialized social order, see Haney Lopez, "White By Law," 775-782. For discussion of how white domination has been socio-embedded through the validation of white European norms of ownership of people and land as established through legislation and case law from the early 1800s onward, see Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness As Property," *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993), 1710-1791.

Methodology and Theoretical Underpinning

To demonstrate how Keller's ministry can be seen as an iteration within the repeating pattern of evangelical ministries shaped by the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism, I rely on a socio-historical analysis of evangelicalism within the United States as a whole, and New York City in particular. This socio-historical analysis interrogates primary and secondary historical materials as well as the findings of sociological studies of evangelicals conducted during the twentieth century. The primary historical material includes the sermons and writings of relevant evangelical figures within twentieth-century evangelicalism, particularly John Roach Straton (1875-1929), Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), William Franklin "Billy" Graham, Jr. (1918-2018), and, of course, Tim Keller (1950-). The secondary historical material takes the form of both academic and popular sources. The academic sources consist of books and journals, a doctoral dissertation, and a master's thesis authored by historians and sociologists working within the field of religious and evangelical studies. The popular sources are taken from newspapers, magazines, web sites and blog posts.[20]

This socio-historical analysis is intentionally more selective than comprehensive. The aim is to identify and describe the two defining characteristics within twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism, namely the unyielding drive to achieve ever greater cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand and the tendency to reflect the racialized social order within U.S. society. The socio-historical analysis then turns to identifying the presence and effects of these two defining characteristics within Keller's ministry in New

---

[20] The use of popular sources is largely the result of necessity as academic sources are currently rather limited on the subjects of late twentieth-century evangelicalism in New York City and Keller's ministry at Redeemer.

York City. Keller's preaching was his primary means of ministry in New York City. A thorough examination of Keller's ministry then requires a content analysis of his preaching. Thus, this dissertation supplements the socio-historical analysis of Keller's ministry context with a content analysis of Keller's sermons.

This content analysis was conducted using both a representative and purposive sample of the sermons Keller preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church from 1989 to 2017. The representative sample was selected from the approximately 1,700 audio recordings of Keller's sermons available on Redeemer's Gospel in Life website. As Keller's sermons qualify as a regularly published source, I used systematic sampling to determine the representative sample.[21] Specifically, every twenty-fifth sermon from 1989-2017 was selected for analysis, totaling 68 sermons, 4 percent of Keller's available sermons. The analysis of this representative sample is used to ensure that any themes identified in the purposive sample are substantially consistent with the whole of Keller's sermons.

A set of 25 sermons comprises the purposive sample used for a more in depth analysis of Keller's preaching. The purposive sample was selected from within a significant time period within Redeemer's history, namely 1995-2005. This time period was significant for Redeemer, because it spanned two major cultural events: the passing of the U.S. presidency from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush and the 9/11 attack. As these events had a profound impact within the cultural landscape of the United States and New York City, selecting thematically similar sermons on either side of these events will balance the

---

[21] Klaus Krippendorff indicates that the technique of systematic sampling, in which the selection is based on an established interval, is favorable to achieve a representative sample when texts issue from a regularly published source. Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 3rd Edition (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications 2013), 115.

impact, if any, these events had on Keller's sermons. Additionally, this ten-year time period occurred just before Keller achieved national prominence as an evangelical figure. Keller's sermons during this period then had a better chance of being geared specifically for his New York City audience without content adjustment for the national audience Keller would come to enjoy as a bestselling author during the latter part of the first decade of the twenty-first century. This purposive sample of Keller's sermons was also chosen to investigate a specific question.[22] Since this dissertation is investigating the degree to which Keller's preaching was shaped by the evangelical impulse to secure greater cultural influence and reflected the mechanisms by which the racialized social order was reproduced and reinforced in twentieth-century U.S. society, the purposive sample allowed for close analysis of sermons whose content was more closely connected to these two defining characteristics.

When analyzing the presence and effects of the second defining characteristic of twentieth-century evangelicalism within Keller's preaching, namely the extent to which Keller's sermons reflected the racialized social order, I encountered a couple of significant methodological obstacles. First, in his sermons, Keller addressed race explicitly and with greater sensitivity than his evangelical predecessors in New York City. Second, Keller's sermons were devoid of overt statements or sentiments that favored the privileging of whites over other races. In response to these methodological obstacles, I grounded the content analysis of Keller's sermons in critical race theory. Critical race theorists challenge dogmatic majoritarian explanations with interpretations that allow for unseen, if not

---

[22] Krippendorff indicates that purposive sampling is an important tool when attempting to answer a specific research question. Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 119.

actively hidden, phenomena to be revealed.[23] Critical race theorists unearth these

phenomena by identifying key circumstances within a historical episode or social

phenomenon and then inferring how these key circumstances reveal the underlying ways

in which the racialized social order is reinforced and reproduced. Critical race theory

offered me both the theoretical justification and methodological grounding for an

examination into the potential for Keller's sermons to function as a means of reinforcing

the racialized social order even in the absence of direct statements of racial prejudice.

Another methodological challenge for both the content analysis of Keller's sermons

and the socio-historical analysis of Keller's ministry in New York City resulted from my

own social and experiential location. I am a white, male pastor who has been trained in the

Reformed tradition. This means I brought my own set of cultural blinders to this project. To

see past these blinders, I heeded both sound sociological method that guards against

researcher bias and the scholarship and voices of people of color who identify and

challenge my cultural presuppositions. Additionally, I led a team that planted a church in

Manhattan in 2006 and pastored that community until 2012.[24] From 2006-2007, I

participated in the Redeemer Fellows Program offered by the Redeemer Church Planting

Center,[25] which included, among other things, monthly instruction sessions with Keller.

This close, direct connection piqued my interest in Keller's ministry as a research topic as

well as imported both biases and insights into my work in this dissertation. Grant Wacker,

a prominent historian of evangelicalism and biographer of Billy Graham, offers an

---

[23] Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, and Ernesto Liendo, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Second Edition (New York: NYU Press, 2012), 25.
[24] The name of this community is City Grace Church. Although it has shifted its focus somewhat since my departure, it remains a vibrant, evangelical church community as of the writing of this dissertation. See http://www.citygraceny.com.
[25] This organization has been renamed as Redeemer City to City. See https://www.redeemercitytocity.com.

important perspective that addresses this concern. He indicates that the days of telling history as a disinterested observer who just discovers the facts are over. The best that can be done now is to try to treat the people involved as the researcher would hope to be treated, "by giving them the benefit of the doubt when the evidence allows it but also by telling the truth without flinching when it does not."[26] I followed this lead to the best of my ability in pursuing this study of Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Overview of Relevant Scholarship

Analyzing the effects and presence of the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism within Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church required dialogue with two main areas of scholarship: (1) twentieth-century historical and sociological studies of evangelicalism in the United States and New York City and (2) critical race theory.

To trace the development within twentieth-century evangelicalism of the unyielding desire to increase cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand and the propensity to reflect the racialized social order, I engaged with several key scholars of history, sociology, and evangelical studies, such as Nancy Ammerman, Randall Balmer, James Bielo, Joel Carpenter, Michael Emerson, Madeline Hsu, George Marsden, Axel Schäfer, Christian Smith, and Matthew Sutton. Based on the work of these scholars, twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States can be broadly grouped into three major eras. The first is the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century, the second the new evangelical era of the mid-twentieth century, and the third the contesting factions era of the late twentieth

---

[26] Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014), 2.

century. Each of these phases within evangelicalism resulted, at least in part, from an underlying tension among evangelical factions about how to gain and exert cultural influence on mainstream U.S. society and included the mechanisms of the racialized social order that were prevalent within their historical period.

The socio-historical analysis of twentieth-century evangelicalism within New York City followed this breakdown into the fundamentalist, new evangelical, and contesting factions eras, but was organized around the major evangelical figures in New York City during each of these eras. These major evangelical figures were John Roach Straton and Harry Emerson Fosdick, both of whom fell in the fundamentalist era, Billy Graham, who dominated the new evangelical era, and Tim Keller, who operated within the contesting factions era. While Straton, Fosdick, and Graham approached their ministries differently than Keller (and each other), each of them shared with Keller the view that New York City served as a setting in which they could multiply the cultural influence of their evangelical brand to the highest possible degree. While vying for their evangelical brand to be perceived as the "true" evangelical faith within New York City, each of Keller's predecessors approached his ministry in ways that reflected more than challenged the modes of maintaining the racialized social order within New York City. More than that, each of Keller's predecessors in New York City either actively supported (Straton) or passively endorsed (Fosdick and Graham) the racialized social order to maximize their audience of middle- to upper-class whites, which they believed was the key to increasing the cultural influence of their evangelical brand.

Keller's ministry in New York City exhibited a negotiation of the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism consistent with Straton, Fosdick, and

Graham. Although operating in a much different historical context, the socio-cultural analysis of Keller's ministry and the content analysis of Keller's sermons indicate that he did not challenge systemic racial injustice as a consequence of his drive to gather in as large an audience of influential young urban professionals as possible. The socio-historical analysis of the ministry of Straton, Fosdick, Graham, and Keller and the content analysis of Keller's sermons relied on the work scholars who have focused on the historical and sociological context of evangelicalism in New York City during the twentieth century, such as Tuck Bartholomew, Matthew Bowman, Frederick Binder, Rufus Burrow, Jr., Jon Butler, Tony Carnes, Harvey Cox, Gary Dorrien, David Reimers, J. Terry Todd, Javier Viera, and Grant Wacker.

In addition to the work of the scholars mentioned above, the content analysis of Keller's sermons employed insights from critical race theory. The concept of "color-blind racism" developed by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva featured prominently in the racial analysis of Keller's preaching.[27] Bonilla-Silva argues that in the post-Civil Rights Act society in the United States, racism has become "color-blind." "Color-blind racism" is a racial ideology[28] that was seemingly nonracial, because it caused elements of "traditional liberalism, work ethic, rewards by merit, equal opportunity, and individualism" to be rearticulated for "racially illiberal goals."[29] Now that overt acts of racial prejudice have gone from being mandated to forbidden by law, racism has assumed a covert, unstated character. Racism

---

[27] Other important critical race theorists who served as dialogue partners in developing the racial analysis used on the content of Keller's sermons were Richard Delgado, Jean Stefancic, Ernesto Liendo, Simon Clarke, Steve Garner, Ian F. Haney Lopez, Courtney Goto, Nell Irvin Painter, Russel Jeung, and Antony Alumkal.

[28] Bonilla-Silva defines "racial ideology" as the racially based frameworks used by actors to explain and justify (dominant race) or challenge (subordinate race or races) the racial status quo. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 9.

[29] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 7.

remains embedded within the social structures of U.S. society, because these social

structures still organize educational and career opportunities for advancement on the basis

of privileging whites over other races.[30] None of Keller's sermons contained explicit or

overt expressions of racial prejudice. To the contrary, Keller explicitly named racial

prejudice as sinful. Nevertheless, my content analysis demonstrated that, unrecognized by

Keller himself, his sermons did indeed exhibit this more covert form of "color-blind

racism."

  To identify this color-blind racism within Keller's sermons, my analysis was guided

by three "frames" identified by Bonilla-Silva: abstract liberalism, naturalization, and

minimization of racism. Abstract liberalism forms the foundation of the color-blind racial

ideology by using ideas associated with political liberalism, such as "equal opportunity,"

"consumer choice," and "individualism," in an abstract manner to explain matters of race.[31]

For instance, viewing affirmative action policies as showing preferential treatment to racial

minorities requires ignoring the material reality that people of color have been severely

underrepresented in most of the top jobs and elite universities. To arrive at this negative

view of affirmative action, whites have to abstract the idea of "equal opportunity" from the

actual social reality for people of color. The naturalization frame enables whites to explain

away racial phenomena by suggesting they are natural occurrences. Preferences for

primary associations among whites with other whites are rationalized as nonracial because

"they (racial minorities) do it too."[32] The minimization of racism frame suggests that

---

[30] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 37-39.

[31] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 26.

[32] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 28. Neil Gotanda's earlier concept of "non-recognition," though relying on more of an individual-psychological conceptual framework, seems to anticipate the frames of abstract liberalism and naturalization identified by Bonilla-Silva. Gotanda argues that the nonrecognition of

discrimination is no longer a central factor affecting racial minorities' life chances. Holding

to sentiments that that "[i]t's better now than in the past" or "[t]here is discrimination, but

there are plenty of jobs out there," whites could then accuse minorities of being

hypersensitive, of using race as an excuse, or "playing the race card."[33] These frames form

an impregnable yet elastic wall that barricades whites from recognizing the racial realities

within U.S. culture during the late twentieth century.[34] In the content analysis of Keller's

sermons, these three frames were helpful in surfacing the mechanisms of color-blind

racism within Keller's preaching.

The racial analysis of Keller's preaching was further augmented by the sociological

and ethnographic studies of evangelicals conducted by the research teams of Michael

Emerson and Christian Smith and of Eric Tranby and Douglas Hartman. The studies of

these research teams offered important insights into the racial dynamics of Keller's

---

race perpetuates systemic racial subordination through the psychological repression of an individual's ability to recognize that subordination. In the post-Civil Rights era, decisions that use color-blind nonrecognition have been regarded as superior to race-conscious ones for the reason that regarding race as a political or special interest consideration cuts against truly meritocratic decision making. Like Bonilla-Silva, Gotanda is firm that nonrecognition ultimately supports the supremacy of white interests, because not recognizing race as operative within decision making denies the reality of internally recognized social conflicts caused by race, which in turn contributes to the general, although specious, sense that all are on a level playing field when pursuing jobs, education, access to the courts or financing. See Neil Gotanda, "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind'" (1991), in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge,* eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 35-37.

[33] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 29.

[34] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 47. The strength and elasticity of this wall results from using these frames in combination: abstract liberalism has trouble standing on its own without help from the minimization of race frame. Bonilla-Silva found that whites tend to mix and match as they see fit, depending on the arguments that have been brought against them. The wall provided by these frames is formidable, because it supplies whites with a seemingly nonracial way of stating their racial views without appearing irrational or overtly racist. Color-blind racism does not rely on absolutes, as evidenced by the flexibility in the use of the frames, and therefore can make room for exceptions. Furthermore, stylistic elements of color blindness provide whites the necessary tools to get in and out of almost any discussion. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 48. Although not entirely relevant for purposes of this dissertation, it would be remiss not to point out that Bonilla-Silva does more than diagnose the deleterious societal effects of "color-blind racism." He also offers five clear strategies to work against color-blind racism. See Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 266-268.

preaching for two main reasons. First, both teams recognized the importance of syncing their sociological and ethnographic analysis with critical race theory, particularly Bonilla-Silva's color-blind racism. Second, each of these teams gathered research specifically on white evangelicals in the United States during the latter twentieth century, providing a baseline for how race was perceived and addressed within the subculture of white U.S. evangelicalism. Emerson and Smith's data, collected in the late 1990s, was particularly instructive as it provided a snapshot of white evangelical views of race that was coterminous with the time period that young urban professionals began to flock into the worship services at Redeemer Presbyterian Church. Tranby and Hartman developed their research in the early 2000s, both updating the conclusions offered by Emerson and Smith and more deeply interrogating their data on white evangelicals.

My racial analysis of Keller's preaching operated within the confines of the "black-white binary" paradigm. This black-white binary has historically dominated and shaped the dialogue on race in the United States. This paradigm essentially divides the population of the United States into two basic racial categories, "white" and "black." Whites occupy the dominant position within U.S. society while blacks are made subordinate to the dominant racial group. Although the black-white binary is a contested paradigm within critical race theory, I bound the racial analysis of Keller's sermons to it for the simple reason that Keller's preaching itself handled race according to the black-white binary. Informed by the racial hierarchy of the black-white binary, the racial analysis of this dissertation not only revealed the color-blind racism reflected in Keller's sermons, but also its impact on Keller's white young urban professional listeners.

While the majority of Keller's congregants at Redeemer Presbyterian Church were white, another significant percentage of them was Asian American. They shared a similar educational background and career trajectory as the white young urban professionals. Thus, my racial analysis also accounted for their unique racial location in accordance with the racial hierarchy of the black-white binary. Within critical race studies, races that do not fit cleanly into categories of "white" or "black" tend to occupy the liminal territory in between. To account for the increasing number of races who fall in between "white" and "black," Bonilla-Silva indicates that U.S. society has evolved into a complex and loosely organized triracial stratification system. By the latter decades of the twentieth century, the "racial totem pole" within U.S. society placed "whites" at the top and the "collective black" at the bottom with an "honorary white" group in between.[35] Within the triracial stratification system, the Asian American young urban professionals who attended Redeemer Presbyterian Church functioned as "honorary whites" who reinforced the impact of the color-blind racism reflected through Keller's sermons. These Asian Americans are shoehorned into the racial category of "honorary white," because the racial analysis of Keller's sermons was bound by the black-white binary. A full analysis of the racial dynamics involved for the Asian Americans who attended Redeemer's worship services

---

[35] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178. Bonilla-Silva differentiates these groups on the basis of a "pigmentocratic logic" that relegates people with darker skin to the bottom of the racial order and lifting those with lighter skin to the top. Within this scheme, whites include "traditional whites, new white immigrants, and totally assimilated white Latinos, lighter skinned multi-racials, and other subgroups" and the collective black are "blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Filipinos, and Laotians." Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178. Although Goto registers criticisms with Bonilla-Silva's triracial scheme, she also classifies it as a specific version of a "middleman" theory adjustment to the black-white binary. The middleman theory retains the black-white binary paradigm, but opens up space in the middle for those who do not fit into the "white" or "black" racial categories. Goto, "Beyond the Black-White Binary," 41. The common element within general middleman theory and Bonilla-Silva's triracial theory is the retaining of the racial hierarchy established by the black-white binary in which whites are at the top and blacks are at the bottom. Claire Jean Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics and Society* 27.1 (1999), 106.

would be much more complex. Such an analysis would make for an important research project in itself, but it would be outside the scope of the current study. As previously indicated, Keller's sermons approach race from the perspective of the black-white binary. Thus, the content analysis of Keller's sermons had to be limited to the confines of the racial hierarchy of the black-white binary.

Significance to Scholarship and Research

I make several contributions to the existing scholarship on evangelicalism in the United States. My socio-historical analysis of Keller's ministry allows this dissertation to tell the as yet untold story of the paradoxical twentieth-century evangelical interest in New York City. Within the imagination of U.S. evangelicalism, New York City functions as a symbol of both what has gone wrong with the broader cultural landscape of the United States and the key to regaining the cultural influence that was lost in the early decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, New York City serves as the central battleground for the soul of the contemporary culture, because its wide-ranging cultural influence has the potential to hasten the demise or facilitate the enlivening of U.S. society as a whole. Keller's objective to tailor his preaching for the influential young urban professionals of New York City is in line with his evangelical predecessors and represents the latest negotiation of this paradoxical evangelical interest during the twentieth century.

My socio-historical analysis also prevents the paradoxical evangelical interest in New York City from being neutral as to race. Evangelical leaders who were interested in multiplying the influence for their particular evangelical brand in and through New York City, such as Fosdick, Straton, Graham, and Keller, were white. They chose to take their ministry to New York City and, even though not their stated intention, they prioritized the

white, middle- to upper-class as the target of their outreach. The cultural influence sought in and through New York City by these evangelical leaders then became inextricably linked to creating and maintaining connection with the white, middle- to upper-class population in New York City. This linkage made the evangelical brand of these white evangelical leaders susceptible to favoring the interests and priorities of their white audience. My socio-historical analysis then demonstrates that the desire to increase the cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand within and through New York City introduces the risk that this same evangelical brand will reflect the racialized social order of New York City and, ultimately, the United States.

My analysis of Keller's ministry also pushes evangelical studies to explore new ways of studying race and evangelicalism. Keller's sermons handled race in accordance with the black-white binary in spite of the reality that between one-third to one-half of his congregants on any given Sunday were of Asian descent. Given that the black-white binary was operative in Keller's sermons, the racial analysis of Keller's preaching proceeded within its confines, making the strengths and weaknesses of the black-white binary evident. Through the black-white binary, I was able to pinpoint how the racialized social order was reflected in Keller's preaching. The racial hierarchy of the black-white binary also allowed for the Asian Americans at Redeemer's worship services to function as honorary whites. However, the racial hierarchy of the black-white binary also inhibited the ability to perform a full analysis of the racial dynamics experienced by the Asian Americans as a result of Keller's preaching at Redeemer's worship services. Within the black-white paradigm, the subjective experience of Asian American young urban professionals when listening to Keller's sermons had no place. Instead, they were reduced to objects within a racial scheme

29

designed to organize the understanding of race in the United States in terms of the relationship between blacks and whites. Studies of evangelicalism in the United States during the twentieth century have been dominated by the black-white binary paradigm. As the number of Asian and Latinx Americans who identify as evangelicals continues to increase, my analysis reveals that analyzing their place within U.S. evangelicalism according to the black-white binary limits the ability to assess and understand the experience of their evangelical faith from their racial perspective.

As a variation on this theme, current scholarship on Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church is sparse, and what little there is does not put Keller's preaching into conversation with critical race theory. By employing the insights of critical race theory to analyze the content of Keller's preaching, my analysis breaks new ground within evangelical studies. More than that, this analysis unearths the reality that Keller's preaching did more to reflect than dismantle the racialized social order that promotes white supremacy in the United States. I was both surprised and unsettled by this result. While analyzing Keller's sermons, I determined that he considers racism to be a grave sin that begets crushing injustice within U.S. society. Yet in spite of this stance, Keller's sermons contained the mechanisms of color-blind racism that perpetuate the racialized social order. These mechanisms made their way into Keller's sermons without him even being aware that they were there, and they effectively undermined his explicit stance against racial injustice.

Part of the reason this result unsettled me was because I too was a white evangelical pastor who came to New York City to plant a church for young urban professionals using Keller's ministry approach. Although the ministry I worked to start did not gather

anywhere close to the numbers as Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, the young urban professionals who started coming were mostly white. My analysis of Keller's ministry has convicted me of the reality that my own preaching would probably come out similar to Keller's if subjected to the same racial analysis. Thus, my own preaching most likely reflected the racialized social order, and therefore contributed to preserving the underlying white supremacy of the United States, in the same ways that Keller's preaching did. Good intentions and the desire to speak out against racial injustice are not enough to save us white, evangelical, male pastors from the fate of inadvertently reflecting the racialized social order through our preaching. My analysis in this dissertation demonstrates that it is imperative for us to supplement our exegetical and homiletical technique with an understanding of critical race theory to prevent our preaching from becoming a surreptitious means of reinforcing white supremacy.

Structure of this Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into four chapters, followed by a conclusion. The first chapter identifies the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism that surface within Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church. These two defining characteristics are the insatiable drive among evangelical leaders to increase the cultural influence for their particular evangelical brand and the reflection of the racialized social order within their particular evangelical brand as the result of trying to amass a large following among the white, middle- to upper-class. This chapter traces these two defining characteristics through three major eras within the historical development of U.S. evangelicalism, the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century, the new evangelical

era of the mid-twentieth century, and the contesting factions era of the late twentieth century.

The second chapter narrows the focus to New York City and is also divided into historical periods that parallel those of the first chapter. Each section centers on the ministry of four key twentieth-century evangelical leaders in New York City within their historical period: John Roach Straton, Harry Emerson Fosdick, Billy Graham, and Timothy Keller. This chapter explores how the first three figures jockey to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand in New York City. This chapter also demonstrates that while striving to increase the influence for their particular evangelical brand, the ministry of Straton, Fosdick, and Graham either explicitly promotes or implicitly allows the racialized social order in New York City to remain intact. This chapter also introduces the socio-historical context for Keller's ministry in late twentieth-century New York City relative to these three evangelical predecessors.

Chapter three covers the first part of the content analysis of Keller's sermons. This chapter identifies key themes in Keller's preaching, all of which are designed to make his evangelical message appealing to his intended audience of young urban professionals. By revealing how Keller crafted his sermons for this segment of the population of New York City, the content analysis of this chapter demonstrates that Keller saw these young urban professionals as the key to increasing the cultural influence of his evangelical brand within New York City and beyond. The racial dynamics of Keller's appeal to these young urban professionals is also highlighted in chapter three.

The fourth chapter focuses more intensely on the racial component to the content analysis of Keller's sermons. This racial analysis investigates the extent to which Keller's

sermons reflect the mechanisms of color-blind racism. Chapter four ends with a brief discussion of how the Asian Americans at Redeemer's worship services support the mechanisms of color-blind racism on display within Keller's sermons. The content analysis of Keller's sermons that spans chapters three and four reveals that for all the astonishing and unprecedented success of Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, it can ultimately be seen as fitting within an established pattern of evangelical ministries that were shaped by the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States.

CHAPTER ONE:

TWO DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church can be seen as an iteration within a pattern of twentieth-century evangelical ministries that were shaped by two defining characteristics. First, twentieth-century evangelical leaders exhibited an unquenchable drive to increase the cultural influence of their evangelical brand. Nineteenth-century evangelicalism in the United States was not yet the contested category it would become during the twentieth century. Although recognizing that each church and denomination developed its own distinctives, nineteenth-century evangelicalism functioned as a common culture across the various Protestant churches and parishioners.[1] This common evangelical culture and the privileged cultural standing of evangelicals within U.S. society[2] was challenged during the early twentieth century with the emergence and popularity of higher biblical criticism and scientific naturalism. Evangelicals rejected these academic developments outright and, after the Scopes Trial in 1925, were successfully portrayed as anti-intellectual by their adversaries and lost mainstream credibility.[3] The loss of their privileged cultural position did not deter subsequent generations of twentieth-century evangelical leaders in their quest to strive for ever greater cultural influence.

---

[1] Kyle B. Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham: Religions and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2016), 4.

[2] In the nineteenth century, evangelicals occupied a privileged position from which to exert influence on U.S. culture. Evangelicals had been educated at top-tier universities such as Yale, Princeton, John Hopkins, and the University of Chicago, with many going on to secure faculty positions at these and other prestigious institutions of higher learning. Evangelicals also enjoyed influence within the political arena through such initiatives as the temperance movement, the crowning achievement of which was the enactment of the Volstead Act that sanctioned Prohibition. D. Michael Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite* (New York: Oxford University Press 2008), 5; Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press 2014), 151.

[3] See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 145-177; Mary Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), Kindle Locations 168-228.

Subsequently, evangelicalism went through different phases of rebranding as these evangelical leaders and their followings vied to establish their brand as the "true" form of evangelicalism. Keller's ministry to the young urban professionals of New York City was one of these attempts to claim his evangelical brand as the "true" form of evangelicalism and amass as much cultural influence for his evangelical brand as possible.

The second defining characteristic that shaped twentieth-century ministries led by white evangelical leaders was the reflection of the racialized social order that undergirded the social context within the United States. The historical roots of the complicity of twentieth-century evangelicalism with the prevailing racialized social order reached back to the nineteenth-century common evangelical culture. Generally, this common evangelical culture followed more than challenged the injustice perpetuated by the racial status quo within nineteenth-century U.S. society. In virtually every generation within the twentieth century, the white evangelical leaders who spearheaded the efforts to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand made little effort to include people of color. More than that, they allowed their evangelical brand to reflect the prevailing mode of the racialized social order within their historical context in an effort to gather in a large following among the white, middle- to upper-class. By tailoring his ministry to attract a group of young urban professionals who were white, middle- and upper-class, Keller again followed the pattern of other twentieth-century evangelical leaders and caused his evangelical brand to reflect the racialized social order of the late twentieth century.

This chapter traces the recurring pattern in which these two characteristics surface within various evangelical ministries and movements during three defined eras of the twentieth century: the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century, the new

evangelical era of the mid-twentieth century, and the contesting factions era of the late twentieth century. Before plunging into the socio-historical analysis of U.S. evangelicalism within these three eras, it must first be pointed out that throughout the twentieth century, "evangelicalism" was a contested category.

Definitional Contest For "True" Evangelical Brand

The twentieth-century contest to control the usage and application of "evangelical" and "evangelicalism" ensued as a consequence of the inability of scholars and practitioners to arrive at a precise, univocal definition for these terms. During the nineteenth century, evangelicalism served as a common culture that spread across and unified distinctive Protestant denominations, churches, and parishioners. Most nineteenth-century Protestant churches and Protestant churchgoers partook of this common evangelical culture and could be labeled generally as "evangelical."[4] In the twentieth century, evangelicalism evolved from being a common culture into a contested category. Axel Schäfer stresses that in the twentieth-century the definition of "evangelical" is far from clear-cut and that several controversies about what constitutes a "true" evangelical are ongoing. The theologically liberal Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and the theologically orthodox National Association of Evangelicals both self-identify with this term. Politically, the term "evangelical" is used to denote various groups with distinct social and economic views, as George W. Bush and Pat Robertson have claimed the term right alongside Bill Clinton and Jesse Jackson.[5] According to Steven Miller, the nature of evangelicalism's

---

[4] George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press 2006), 231.
[5] Axel Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Press 2011), 18.

impact on late twentieth-century U.S. culture and politics was pervasive enough that no one

expression of evangelicalism could lay sole claim to it, and no one group fully controlled the

narrative.[6] The sheer diversity of groups that can be classified as evangelical proves

Miller's point. Robert Johnston argues that U.S. evangelicalism finds expression across a

wide variety of traditions, including mainline Protestant churches (Episcopal, Presbyterian,

Methodist), Reformation churches with a strict interpretation of their confessions

(Missouri Synod, Lutherans, Christian Reformed), the "peace" churches (Brethren,

Mennonite, Friends), the conservative wing of the Restoration movement (Campbellites),

the "Holiness" tradition (Wesleyan Methodists), Baptists, the fundamentalist groups, and

Pentecostals.[7] This reality renders "evangelicalism" a contested category within twentieth-

century religious and cultural studies in the United States, effectively opening the space for

competition among different evangelical factions to define who qualifies as a "true"

evangelical. At stake in this definitional competition is the ability to gather under its banner

a controlling market share, a group large enough to engender that faction with the social

power to exert maximal cultural influence for their particular evangelical brand.

This definitional contest surfaces even in the attempts to identify the historical roots

of evangelicalism. Nancy Ammerman notes that evangelicalism was a term adopted from

European Christianity, dating back to the Protestant Reformation, when it

functioned synonymously with the term "Protestant." In the American republic,

---

[6] Steven P. Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years* (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), 9. Schäfer echoes this sentiment by noting that conservative Protestantism is not a monolithic player in a culture war but a disparate movement with tentative and negotiable political allegiances. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 6.

[7] See Robert Johnston, "American Evangelicalism: An Extended Family" in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism, eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press 1991), 252-272.

evangelicalism assumed a distinct character as it combined distinctive elements of personal piety, in the form of studying the Scriptures and living a prudent, sober, and godly life, with a potent revivalist sentiment that elevated the experiential dimension of religious experience. The advent of Pentecostalism at the end of the nineteenth century, with its mystical emphasis on "hearing God's voice" and receiving "healings and the gift of tongues," also heavily influenced more established evangelical traditions within the American religious landscape.[8] Randall Balmer provides a similar background for the term "evangelical" as it has developed within the study of religious expression in the United States. He identifies "American evangelicalism" as being derived from the eighteenth century confluence of "three P's": Scots-Irish Presbyterianism, with its emphasis on adhering to biblical doctrine, Continental Pietism, hailing the importance of a personally vibrant relationship with the divine, and the vestiges of New England Puritanism, admonishing attention to personal morality and godly living.[9] Some scholars within evangelical studies, such as Donald Dayton, challenge Balmer's choice of historical antecedents for U.S. evangelicalism. Dayton argues that depicting the historical roots of U.S. evangelicalism without reference to the influence of Methodism and Pentecostalism skews the perception of what qualifies as "true" evangelicalism in the United States.[10] Although most scholars seem to agree with Balmer and Ammerman that strains of European Protestantism commingled to form a distinctive evangelicalism within the United States,

---

[8] Nancy Ammerman, "American Evangelicals in American Culture: Continuity and Change," in *Evangelicals in Democracy in America,* Volume 1, eds. Stephen G. Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009), 52.

[9] Randall Balmer, *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press 2010), 2.

[10] For more on this debate over the historical influences on evangelicalism in the United States, see Joel Carpenter, *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press 1997), 236-237.

the contest to define the parameters of this distinctive expression of evangelicalism in the United States is far from settled.

Scholars have advanced various methods of attempting to define this distinctive expression of evangelicalism in the United States during the twentieth century. George Marsden has defined evangelicalism according to a historical schema that uses the word "evangelical" to designate evangelicalism within the pre-twentieth century context in the United States, "fundamentalist" for the early twentieth century, "new evangelical" for the mid-twentieth century, and the "fundamentalist evangelical" for the late twentieth century.[11] James Bielo has added "emerging evangelicals" as another label for the historical context in the late twentieth century.[12] While these historical classifications do offer a measure of definitional clarity within the particular epochs of the twentieth century, this schema tends to leave the impression that there is far greater discontinuity than continuity between these different groups.

Matthew Sutton argues the opposite is true. Tracing the theological innovation of apocalyptic premillennial dispensationalism from its origins in the late nineteenth century to its refinement through the subsequent generations of evangelicals through the entire twentieth century, Sutton emphasizes the political and theological common threads that exist between the group of Protestants he refers to as "radical evangelicals," who rebranded themselves as "fundamentalists" during the early twentieth century, then as "new evangelicals" during the mid-twentieth century, and finally as "evangelicals" during

---

[11] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture,* 232-234.
[12] James Bielo, *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity* (New York: New York University Press 2011), 6.

the late twentieth century.[13]

Adding to the chorus, Darren Dochuk has defined evangelicalism according to a method of geographic differentiation. Dochuk traces the social effects of the massive migration of "southern evangelicals" to California, noting that southern evangelicals had a distinctive disposition that they imposed on the Golden State. They exuded a "Texas theology," an unwavering certainty in the rightness of their doctrine that included both an unwillingness to compromise doctrine itself and a restless openness to new ways of proselytizing. Within California's religious climate, these southern evangelicals displayed a gritty determination and a spirit of pragmatism that set them apart, even from Southern California's resident evangelicals. These resident evangelicals were often "serious, quiet, intense, humorless, sacrificial, and patient" in times of peak religious experience, and, in contrast, the southern evangelicals were constantly "busy, vocal, promotional," and "task-oriented."[14]

Omri Elisha identifies another defining differentiation within U.S. evangelicalism. After conducting an ethnographic study of two evangelical megachurches in Knoxville, Tennessee from 1999 to 2002, Elisha settled on referring to evangelicals as people who remain committed to promoting and maintaining a traditional, orthodox Protestant theology and belief while becoming simultaneously proactively engaged in the intellectual, cultural, social, and political life of the nation. Elisha then proceeds to differentiate evangelicals under the label "conservative" or "liberal" with respect to their approach to

---

[13] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 2.
[14] Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism,* Kindle Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010), Kindle location 271, 274-275.

social action. The subjects of Elisha's study are grouped into the "conservative evangelical" category so as to prevent confusion with other U.S. evangelicals who would self-identify as "progressive or left-wing."[15] David Watt complexifies Elisha's definitional scheme. Watt conducted an ethnography of three evangelical congregations in Philadelphia in the early 1990s. As a result of this study, Watt became more comfortable referring to the congregants at these churches as "Bible-carrying Christians," mostly because he discovered that these congregants did not self-identify as "evangelicals" or "conservative." Yet the common theme among all these congregants was their high regard for the Bible as "an indispensable and utterly trustworthy guide to the nature of the universe in which we live."[16] Along with problematizing the use of the label "evangelical," Watt presents a group of churches whose approaches to social action seem to defy categorization on one side of the conservative-liberal binary set up by Elisha and yet still exhibit distinctive approaches to social action that incorporate elements from both sides of this binary. Like the historical schema proposed by Marsden, differentiation of evangelicalism by geographic region or the approach to social engagement still does not offer a stable, commonly accepted definition for "evangelical" or "evangelicalism" in the United States.

Other efforts to secure a stable definition, and therefore lay claim to who qualifies as a "true" evangelical, has led some scholars to focus on the commonalities present among the different generations in the twentieth century. Michael Lindsay proposes that an "evangelical" is "someone who believes (1) that the Bible is the supreme authority for

---

[15] Omri Elisha, *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2011), 11.
[16] David Harrington Watt, *Bible-Carrying Christians: Conservative Protestants and Social Power* (New York: Oxford University Press 2002), 4-5.

religious belief and practice, (2) that he or she has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and (3) that one should take a transforming, activist approach to faith." Lindsay also attentively points out that evangelicalism in the U.S. constitutes not only a set of beliefs, but also a social movement and an all-encompassing identity.[17] Schäfer offers an even broader appraisal of who constitutes an evangelical, arguing this term designates a particular strand of Protestantism in the United States located "somewhere between fundamentalists and mainline moderates."[18] Marsden joins the party as well, defining "evangelical" apart from his historical schema in terms of what he considers to be "essential evangelical beliefs": (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority of the Bible, (2) the real historical character of God's saving work recorded in Scripture, (3) salvation to eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and missions, and (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.[19]

More recently scholars within evangelical studies, such as Matthew Sutton and Antony Alumkal, have indicated that religious communities of color whose beliefs align with the commonalities identified by Lindsay, Schäfer, and Marsden are too often left out of the conversation.[20] To that point, Marsden recognizes that African American Protestants have been almost entirely separate from white churches since the Civil War, but he still somewhat curiously indicates that the term "evangelical" can be applied to these religious

---

[17] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls,* 4.
[18] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives* 19.
[19] George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1991), 4-5.
[20] See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 2-5; See also Antony W. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches: Race, Ethnicity, and Assimilation in the Second Generation* (New York: LFB Scholarly Publishing 2003), 1-7. Although Ammerman argues that evangelicalism has developed more of a multicultural sensibility that allows African American, Latinx, and Asian American voices to be heard among those of white evangelicals. Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 60.

communities in spite of the fact that they themselves rarely self-identify with it.[21] Dochuk

recognizes that the massive migration of evangelicals from the south included whites and

African Americans, but explicitly limits his study to the white evangelicals,[22] giving the

impression that, in spite of the enormous cultural impact of the multi-ethnic movement of

Pentecostalism which began in Azusa, California in the early 1900s, it is primarily southern

white evangelicals who shaped the religious climate of the emerging evangelicalism of the

California Sun Belt. Amplifying the observation that the scholarship on evangelicalism has

been historically preoccupied with evangelicals who are white males, Linda Kintz has

argued that the post-World War II evangelical resurgence surprised many scholars,

because they had not paid enough attention to observe with "real curiosity, rather than

ironic condescension" the thinking and activity of conservative religious women who could

also be grouped under the evangelical label.[23]

The dearth of attention paid to evangelical communities of color within the

conversation ups the stakes in the contest to control who qualifies as a "true" evangelical.

Dayton has argued that the word "evangelical" has become inherently equivocal,

an "essentially contested concept" that different groups simply supply with their own

content.[24] Dayton attributes the persistence of the category "evangelical" not to the

commonalities of a certain cluster of churches, but more to the power politics of the new

evangelicals and fundamentalists after World War II. Balmer echoes Dayton in arguing that

---

[21] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 2.

[22] Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, Kindle Location 291.

[23] Linda Kintz, *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions that Matter in Right-Wing America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1997), 2.

[24] Donald Dayton, "Some Doubts about the Usefulness of the Category 'Evangelical'" in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism,* eds. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press 1991), 245.

the term "evangelical" has been co-opted for the purpose of wielding political influence to promote a conservative agenda.[25] As Dayton and Balmer point out, the contested nature of the meaning of evangelicalism coupled with the ability to mobilize a sizable demographic of the electorate under its banner has prompted particular groups throughout the twentieth century to vie, sometimes explicitly so, for control over the "true" evangelical brand to advance their purposes.

This contest to control the "true" evangelical brand has an often unstated and overlooked racial component to it. The assertion of control over who qualifies as a "true" evangelical has contributed to a hegemony that leaves out, or even actively suppresses, the voices and experiences of communities of color.[26] Sutton points out a glaring deficiency in the historical description of the movement in that it features almost exclusively white males. Tony Carnes seems to push against this deficiency, explicitly broadening the term "evangelicalism" to apply to religious communities whose congregants are primarily of color. In a recent article entitled "The Evangelical Christians of Williamsburg-Greenpoint," Carnes "broadly" defines "evangelical" to include all Protestant churches that emphasize that people's "hearts are marred by sin and that evangelism is an expression of the good news (gospel) that evil deeds can be forgiven and hearts can be fundamentally transformed by believing in Jesus as the Son of God resurrected from the dead, and the Bible is the word

---

[25] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 75-82.

[26] Although this hegemony also marginalizes the voices and experiences of women (of any race), this dissertation focuses primarily on race with respect to U.S. evangelicalism. For discussion on women and U.S. evangelicalism, see Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2003) and Linda Kintz, *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions that Matter in Right-Wing America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1997). See also Natasha Sistrunk Robinson, "Being Black, a Woman, and an Evangelical," Missio Alliance (blog), May 23, 2017, http://www.missioalliance.org/black-woman-evangelical/.

of God."[27] Defying the ambivalence among scholars about whether Pentecostalists qualify

as "true" evangelicals,[28] Carnes groups Pentecostal churches that embrace such "gifts of the

Spirit" as speaking in tongues, healing, and prophecy within his definition of "evangelical."

This broad definition then allows him to identify sixty-four congregations as "evangelical"

in the Williamsburg-Greenpoint area, most of which include congregations with majorities

of Hispanic, African American, Vietnamese, and Greek ethnicities.[29] This expansive

definition of "evangelical" seems to have been operative throughout Carnes' career.

Virtually all the ministries Carnes highlights as evangelical during the late 1980s in New

York City are composed of people of color.[30]

Carnes' inclusion of people of color within evangelicalism does not dislodge the

"glaring deficiency" identified by Sutton. In fact, the push to gather people of color under a

generalized evangelical banner could further the hegemony that leaves race out of the

contest to define "evangelicalism." In an account of the development of African American

Evangelicalism and the founding of the National Black Evangelical Association[31] during the

twentieth century, Albert G. Miller affirms that African American pastors and religious

communities have largely gone unnoticed in the historical study of U.S. evangelicalism.

---

[27] Tony Carnes, "The Evangelical Christians of Williamsburg-Greenpoint: A Journey Through Williamsburg-Greenpoint Religions," *A Journey Through NYC Religions*, September 26, 2018, https://www.nycreligion.info/evangelical-christians-williamsburggreenpoint/.

[28] This scholarly ambivalence becomes apparent in the debate between George Marsden and Donald Dayton. Joel Carpenter provides a summary of this debate, noting that Marsden represents the scholarly position that casts U.S. evangelicalism as rationalist, conservative, doctrinally orthodox, and anti-modernist. Dayton, on the other hand, argues that U.S. evangelicalism should be understood through a "Pentecostal paradigm," because he considers it to be an essentially experiential, populist, sectarian, millenarian, anti-creedal, doctrinally innovative, and often socially radical religious impulse. Although he does not make reference to this debate, Carnes seems to align his expansive definition of evangelicalism with Dayton's Pentecostal paradigm. For more on this Marsden-Dayton debate, see Carpenter, *Revive Us Again,* 236-237.

[29] Carnes bases this observation on a census he conducted in 2014. Carnes, "Evangelical Christians."

[30] See Tony Carnes, "New York's New Hope," *Christianity Today* (May 2004), 34-36.

[31] Originally named the "National Negro Evangelical Association."

Furthermore, Miller indicates that twentieth century African American pastors whose theology had much in common with their white evangelical counterparts explicitly rejected the generalized label "evangelical" due to the association of U.S. evangelicalism with white supremacist culture.[32] Tejai Beulah points out that these African American pastors identified themselves intentionally as "black evangelicals." Claiming this race-conscious label allowed these African American pastors to both disassociate themselves from the culture of white supremacy co-mingled with U.S. evangelicalism and instead advocate for an evangelicalism that took seriously the call to strive for racial justice. In reviewing the work of Miller and other scholars, Beulah ultimately concludes that within scholarly discourse the generalized term "evangelical" is "predominately interpreted to signify conservative Christianity, whiteness, and a specific political affiliation and economic class."[33] The term "evangelical" then cannot truly be understood without bringing race into the definition, and the generalized terms of "evangelical" and "evangelicalism" connote a religious and social movement associated with the agenda to reinforce and reproduce white privilege within U.S. culture. In other words, in the absence of any other qualification, the word "white" attaches as an invisible descriptor to the words "evangelical" and "evangelicalism" within the contest to control the definition of the "true" evangelical.

While Sutton's more race-sensitive analysis and the observations of Miller and Beulah reveal a generalized, race-neutral use of the term "evangelical" as a hegemony that aligns evangelicalism with the racialized social order, these authors do not address the

---

[32] See Albert G. Miller, "The Rise of African-American Evangelicalism in American Culture," in *Perspectives on American Religion and Culture*, ed. Peter W. Williams (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers 1999), 259-269.
[33] Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13.

relationship between Asian Americans and U.S. evangelicalism during the twentieth century. Although Sutton does note that historians also need to integrate Asian Americans and Latinx religious groups into the study of twentieth century U.S. evangelicalism,[34] by leaving the discussion of those racial groups out he seems to reinforce the black-white binary that has dominated racial analysis within the United States. Alumkal argues that since passing the Immigration Act of 1965, the United States has been greeted by a new wave of Asian and Latinx immigrants who have altered the American ethnic landscape and, by extension, the landscape of evangelicalism within the United States.[35] Thus, inserting race into the definitional contest to control who qualifies as a "true" evangelical is not as simple as paying more attention to the voices of any one minority racial group. Factoring in the perspectives of Miller and Beulah in particular help to demonstrate that groups who vie for control of the evangelical brand without any race-sensitivity inevitably associate their brand with the prevailing racialized social order. Yet importing the black-white binary into this definitional contest institutes another hegemony that flattens out the uniqueness of racial groups who hold common evangelical beliefs and do not fit cleanly into the racial categories of "white" or "black."

This definitional contest is intentionally not brought to closure here, because it remained an open conflict within twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States. The following socio-historical analysis of twentieth-century evangelicalism shows that the contest to define who constitutes a "true" evangelical was about amassing the greatest possible amount of cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand. As twentieth-

---

[34] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 382-383.
[35] Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical*, 1.

century white evangelical leaders vied for a controlling "market share" for their evangelical brand, a common thread emerged in the, generally unintentional, association of their evangelical brand with the prevailing racialized social order in their historical context. This chapter ultimately establishes that these two defining characteristics recur as a pattern within evangelical ministries, including that of Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, throughout the twentieth century. The socio-historical analysis of this chapter also exposes the reality that even though these twentieth-century white evangelical leaders generally did not intend to associate their evangelical brand with the racialized social order that promotes white supremacy, this association occurred nonetheless. Thus, this chapter lays the groundwork for recognizing the importance of increasing racial awareness among white evangelical leaders to prevent our ministries from inadvertently contributing to systemic racial injustice.

The Fundamentalist Era

During the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century, the two defining characteristics within evangelicalism began to emerge through the fundamentalist-modernist controversy. The evangelical brand of the fundamentalists was forged through their acrimonious conflict with the modernists over what constituted the "true" Christian faith. As the fundamentalists advocated for their evangelical brand to have greater cultural influence among the mainstream, white, middle-class, they disregarded the voices of pastors and theologians of color and caused their evangelical brand to reflect the prevailing modes of the racialized social order of the twentieth century. The fundamentalists essentially developed the initial version of the evangelical brand that would later be rebranded by both Billy Graham and Tim Keller and infused the DNA of this evangelical

brand with the quest to achieve greater cultural influence at the expense of reflecting the racialized social order.

Coalescing of the American Fundamentalist Movement

The seeds of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy were planted when a group Sutton refers to as "radical evangelicals" embraced a particular form of apocalyptic theology that was gaining steam in the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century. This apocalyptic theology came to be known as premillennial dispensationalism[36] and caught on in the United States largely as a result of the popularity of the *Scofield Reference Bible*. Originally published in 1909 and written by Cyrus I. Scofield, the *Scofield Reference Bible* included dispensational premillennialist commentary alongside the biblical text. Scofield believed, along with other premillennial dispensationalists of that era, that humanity was entering its final chapter and the Bible held the clues that would both explain and offer deliverance from the coming apocalyptic tribulations. His commentary included in the *Scofield Reference Bible* was designed to help readers identify those clues and to live accordingly in light of the coming doom. Although some notable figures subscribed to this approach, most mainstream theologians in the United States during the late nineteenth century considered premillennial dispensationalism and its grim view of humanity a distasteful and inaccurate approach to biblical interpretation. The advances in culture and science made during the Victorian Era engendered most theologians with a sense of optimism about human progress. They believed humanity was inevitably marching

---

[36] John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) is credited as being the architect of dispensational premillennialism. However, Darby's ministry was largely in the United Kingdom, and it is unclear how much of his thought would have filtered over to the United States had the Scofield Reference Bible not caught on. See R. Todd Magnum and Mark S. Sweetnam, *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church* (Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing 2009), 53-86.

toward greater peace and prosperity. Although addressed in more detail later, it is important to stress at this point that this belief was held by white theologians. The personal experience of theologians and pastors of color in the United States made them well aware that a system that made these advances while victimizing entire groups of people on the basis of their racial status was not making genuine social progress for the benefit of all humanity. Thus, creedal conservatives, Social Gospel liberals, and political progressives, all of whom were white, subscribed to this view of humanity and history and were the dominant voices within U.S. theological circles and in the broader society. [37]

The radical evangelicals rejected this optimism, and the global catastrophe of World War I signaled to a broader audience that their doomsday view of the world and humanity held water. These radical evangelicals could provide a viable, realistic alternative to the "rosy religion of Social Gospel optimists."[38] By fitting the events of World War I into their apocalyptic theology with unwavering confidence, radical evangelicals gave the impression they had the ability to anticipate and explain the conflicts emerging in a rapidly changing world. They saw World War I not only as the preparation for the Second Coming, but also as a means by which God was punishing the European nations for their sins. They generally agreed that Germany's liberal theology and embrace of Darwinian theories of human origins was the root cause of the conflict.

When World War I ended in armistice rather than Armageddon, the radical evangelicals were forced to reinterpret their prophecies (and did so deftly). Even so, the movement coalesced, became better organized, and had gained a sense of momentum. They

---

[37] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 48.
[38] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 51.

were vindicated in their assessment that humankind was not ready for peace and warned

that people must prepare for the coming apocalyptic tribulations. This brought a sense of

urgency and unwillingness to compromise into their politics, as they believed that any

compromise and failure to respond amounted to complicity with the forces of the

Antichrist that were being unleashed upon the world. As strange as these ideas might seem,

the clarity and conviction that radical evangelicals offered during those times of

uncertainty and tumult during the early twentieth century allowed them to push their

ideas closer to the cultural mainstream.[39]

Thousands of Americans became captivated by their message. For many people, the

United States after 1918 seemed dramatically changed from the country they had lived in

at the end of the nineteenth century.[40] Several dearly held beliefs about God, the Bible, and

the Christian faith were considered outdated, or even bizarre, as modernist views filtered

into seminary education and the Protestant churches. The modernists employed critical

readings of the Bible, used scientific lenses for history and archeology, and celebrated the

possibility of unity among followers of the world religions and brotherhood under one

universal god.[41] As modernist views shifted the cultural ethos in the United States,

particularly in the cities and major metropolitan areas, many believers felt alienated in

their home country. Nancy Ammerman suggests that some experienced an intense

disequilibrium during this period, because they felt that U.S. society was being dislodged

from stable, traditional ways of life. Modernists seemed to be prodding them to discard

their quaint approach to life and accept the more sophisticated modernist way of

[39] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 78.
[40] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 204.
[41] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 54.

embracing a changed world. This created a destabilizing cultural context as the very definitions of good and evil were being renegotiated. Into this destabilizing cultural environment, radical evangelicals reasserted clear lines between good and evil, and their theology effectively reaffirmed and recalibrated more traditional views to fit within the changing circumstances. They effectively preserved organizing polarities for a certain segment of the population that quieted their sense of disequilibrium and brought order within a time of chaos.[42] In response to the modernist call for change, radical evangelicals offered people an alternative view that, for many, resonated with their tightly held spiritual convictions and their growing fear that the United States was devolving into a godless nation.[43] The clarity and conviction offered by the radical evangelicals was retooled, but remained a mainstay in the rebranded versions of evangelicalism in the mid- and late twentieth century. Offering white, middle-class Americans clarity and conviction as they negotiated their internal anxieties over the radical social changes that occurred during the twentieth century became a powerful means by which subsequent evangelical leaders, such as Graham and Keller, could attract large followings for their evangelical brand.

During the interwar period, radical evangelicals organized into the broader coalition historians have referred to as American fundamentalism. This coalition was so named because this group of leaders, pastors, and lay believers wanted to return to what they considered to be the "fundamentals" of the Christian faith.[44] They adamantly opposed the

---

[42] Nancy Ammerman, "Accounting for Christian Fundamentalisms: Social Dynamics and Rhetorical Strategies," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004), 155.

[43] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 205.

[44] Although the exact list of what qualified as the "fundamentals" of the historic Christian faith was never fully settled during that era, scholars indicate that theses fundamentals generally included adhering to such beliefs as biblical inerrancy, the Virgin Birth, the existence of actual miracles, the literal incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the coming judgment at the end of days. See Sutton,

modernist hermeneutic, insisting that the Bible need not be reinterpreted according to scientific explanations. They contended that Jesus' death and resurrection were literal, historical events that served as the only basis for salvation and hope for humanity. Fundamentalists also retained the premillennialist apocalyptic urgency of the previous generation, clinging to the belief that Jesus' return to rescue believers from an increasingly sinful world was imminent.[45] Taking notice that these once fringe approaches to biblical interpretation and apocalyptic prophecy were gaining traction among larger segments of the population during the interwar period, liberal Protestants stepped up their criticism of radical evangelicals and their gloomy apocalyptic views. The clash of these two sides created the controversy from which American fundamentalism emerged.[46]

The general public's ambivalence, and outright consternation in some cases, over evolution became the flashpoint for the fundamentalist-modernist controversy during the 1920s. The fundamentalists saw World War I as a turning point in the debate on evolution, because many fundamentalists saw the integration of liberal theology with Darwinian philosophies as the inspiration for the German war machine. After the German threat abated, fundamentalists began to associate military might, atheism, communism, and Protestant liberalism with Darwinian ideas. Sutton points out that skepticism about evolutionary theory drove many fundamentalists to doubt the value of science as a whole.[47] Theological liberals subscribed to the modernist trend of employing a higher critical interpretive method that deemphasized the supernatural and tended to treat the Bible as a

---

American Apocalypse, 79-80; Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (New York: Oxford University Press 2010), 3.

[45] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 55.

[46] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 78.

[47] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 164-165.

culturally significant, rather than divinely inspired, text. According to Marsden, the

fundamentalists, on the other hand, continued to interpret the Bible as the divinely

inspired revelation of God to humanity and, therefore, the highest authority over

individuals and societies.[48] They worked to build coalitions with other theological

conservatives who shared these beliefs and saw themselves as holding the line against the

influence of what they deemed to be the secular and modernist influences of the theological

liberals. This conflict over evolution and everything it signified became a full public

spectacle in 1925 with what came to be known as the "Scopes Monkey Trial" in Dayton,

Tennessee.

William Jennings Bryan, former Secretary of State, former presidential nominee, and

a staunch Republican, was leading the charge against evolution and eventually became the

public face of American fundamentalism.[49] In 1922, Bryan published an article in *The New*

York Times that set forth his religious criticism of teaching evolution in public schools. He

argued that evolutionary theory diminishes the dignity of humans by making us the

descendants of "lower forms of life" and raises "questions about the Bible as an

authoritative source of truth" that robs "the life of the young of spiritual values" by

supplanting them with materialistic views. [50] Bryan's well-publicized attack prompted

---

[48] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 3; Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 54.

[49] Sutton notes some irony in Bryan becoming the poster child for American Fundamentalism. Bryan himself actually cared very little for the apocalyptic ideas that drove a lot of the fundamentalists' urgency, favoring instead a postmillennialist approach toward progressive social reforms. Bryan also preached toleration and practiced it by working with Catholics and Jews, which was anathema for most fundamentalists. In actuality, Bryan represented neither the fundamentalist nor the modernist, but the American Protestant majority, which was somewhere in the middle. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 168.

[50] William Jennings Bryan, "God and Evolution," *New York Times*, February 26, 1922. Interestingly, much of the African American religious press supported Bryan's crusade, while black intellectuals, such as W.E.B DuBois, complained about the fundamentalist dismissiveness toward science. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 175.

Harry Emerson Fosdick, on behalf of urbane religious liberals throughout the country, to respond with his own article in *The New York Times*. He proposed that Bryan was the true enemy of the Christian faith, because he was setting up "artificial adhesions between Christianity and outgrown scientific opinions."[51] The battle lines had been drawn between the fundamentalists and the theological liberals. Goaded by many prominent leaders within the fundamentalist movement, such as William Bell Riley (the "Grand Old Man of Fundamentalism"), J. Frank Norris (the "Texas Tornado"), John Roach Straton, and Billy Sunday, Tennessee lawmakers passed the "Butler Bill" in 1925, which outlawed the teaching of "any theory that denies the story of Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and teach instead thereof that man descended from a lower order of animals."[52] Aware the American Civil Liberties Union was spoiling to defend any teacher who violated antievolution laws, local city boosters in Dayton, Tennessee recruited Thomas Scopes to teach science at the public school, and Scopes ultimately confessed to teaching evolution in violation of the Butler Bill. The infamous Scopes Trail was on.

Although Bryan prevailed at trial, his victory in support of the Butler Bill caused fundamentalists to lose ground in their quest to increase the cultural influence for their brand of evangelicalism within U.S. society. Clarence Darrow, the ACLU attorney representing Scopes, framed the proceedings as a contest against fundamentalism, opening the trial with a dramatic speech that linked fundamentalism with ignorance and bigotry. [53] Darrow then used the trial proceedings to paint "fundamentalists" as obscurantist, anti-

---

[51] Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Attacks W.J.B.," *New York Times*, March 12, 1922.
[52] Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 48.
[53] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 169.

intellectual, politically extremist, and generally backward-thinking.[54] H. L. Mencken, a

reporter known as the "Sage of Baltimore," labelled everyone who disagreed with

evolutionary theory a "fundamentalist" regardless of her or his actual religious affiliations

and buried them under layers of merciless lampoon.[55] The rest of the nation's leading

journalists followed Mencken's lead. Fundamentalists realized they had been pulled into a

no-win debate against the nation's most respected scientists, sharpest skeptics, and leading

journalists, all of whom portrayed fundamentalism as a retrograde religion that evoked the

history of medieval crusades and Inquisition.[56] After the trial concluded, some

fundamentalists recognized that their credibility had been severely damaged and felt that

the mainstream culture in the United States had turned against them.

Effect of the Scopes Trial

A consensus of scholars within evangelical studies of this period generally holds

that the Scopes trial moved fundamentalists to set aside their goals for transforming

society and refocus their energies inward toward developing their own religious

communities. For example, Ammerman suggests that fundamentalists "opted out" of

reforming the institutions within U.S. culture and instead developed alternative institutions

and organizations that conformed to their theological views.[57] Balmer supports

Ammerman's assessment, concluding that the Scopes Trial pushed fundamentalists to

retreat from society, forsaking mainstream culture in favor of building an alternative

---

[54] George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New* Evangelicalism (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1987), 10; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 4.

[55] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 4.

[56] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 170.

[57] Nancy Ammerman, "The Dynamics of Christian Fundamentalism," in *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2004), 13.

subculture for themselves.[58] Fundamentalists insulated themselves from the larger U.S.

society by forming their own congregations, denominations, missionary societies,

publishing houses, Bible institutes, Bible colleges, Bible camps, and seminaries. Of

particular importance to generating their subculture was the establishment of an

alternative set of schools that would equip succeeding generations with the practical tools

needed to spread the movement's apocalyptic message.[59] Moody Bible Institute (1886) and

the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (1908)[60] became two of the nation's leading

fundamentalist schools, but many other schools popped up all over the nation.[61] Balmer

seems impressed by the infrastructure created to support this fundamentalist subculture,

naming it as "nothing short of astonishing." By the mid-twentieth century, Balmer points

out that most people associated with the fundamentalist movement socialized almost

entirely within an alternate universe, able to avoid almost all commerce with anyone

outside of their subculture.[62] Lindsay names these decades after the Scopes Trial as the

"Great Reversal" for the fundamentalists. He affirms that they removed themselves from

the cultural mainstream and fashioned strong boundaries between themselves and the rest

---

[58] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 49.

[59] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 151.

[60] Now the Bible Institute of Los Angeles goes by the name BIOLA University.

[61] Some examples include Northwestern Bible and Missionary Training School in Minneapolis (1902), the Denver Bible Institute (1914), the Philadelphia School of the Bible (1914), the Central Bible Institute in Missouri (1922), the LIFE Bible College in Los Angeles (1923), the Columbia School of the Bible in South Carolina (1923), the Evangelical Bible College (later Dallas Theological Seminary) in Texas (1924), and Bob Jones University in Florida (1927). Only Bob Jones University was started after the Scopes Trial. Two other schools played an important role in the spread of fundamentalism, Wheaton College, located just outside of Chicago (1860), and the pre-Machen controversy Princeton Theological Seminary (1812). Unlike other fundamentalist institutes of higher learning, Wheaton offered the full liberal arts curriculum and emphasized classical studies rather than just ministry training and premillennialist theology. Princeton Theological Seminary had long been the bastion of old-school Presbyterianism and conservative Protestantism with such towering figures as Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield challenging the liberal approaches to the Scripture. See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 154-156.

[62] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 49-50.

of society. Quite often these boundaries were marked by legalistic attention to avoiding

certain acts of impropriety, such as dancing, smoking, drinking alcohol, wearing makeup,

playing cards, and going to the theater. Fundamentalists gave up their goals of

transforming society and instead withdrew into "pessimism and separatism."[63]

One example of this withdrawal that had major implications for Keller's evangelical

ministry in New York City during the late twentieth century was John Gresham Machen's

departure from the Princeton Theological Seminary to form Westminster Theological

Seminary during the 1920s. In 1923, John Gresham Machen (1881-1937), then a professor

at Princeton Theological Seminary, the flagship educational institution of the Presbyterian

Church in the United States of America (PCUSA),[64] assumed the anti-modernist position

against theological liberals in a publication entitled *Christianity and Liberalism.*[65] Machen

considered liberal-modernist theology to be heretical, and conservative-evangelical

theology to represent "true" Christianity. Machen called for the liberal-modernist

theologians to withdraw from Protestant seminaries and denominations, leaving them to

conservatives who were the rightful heirs of Protestant orthodoxy.[66] This controversy

spilled over into the PCUSA, and pastors began choosing sides with either the "exclusivist"

conservatives or the "inclusivist" liberals. Eventually, Machen's hostility toward modernism

---

[63] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 6.

[64] Though similar in title, the historical denomination of the PCUSA should not be confused with the contemporary Presbyterian Church (USA). The historical PCUSA merged with the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (UPCUSA) in 1958. In 1983, the Presbyterian Church of the United States (PCUS, originally the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States in America) merged with the UPCUSA to form the contemporary denomination of the PC(USA). For further description of the historical development of the PC(USA), see Russell E. Hall, "American Presbyterian Churches—A Genealogy, 1706-1982," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 60 (1982), 95-128; Bradley J. Longfield, *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press 2013).

[65] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 174.

[66] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 47.

estranged him from his colleagues at Princeton and angered the leaders of the PCUSA. In 1929, Princeton Theological Seminary's governance was restructured to block Machen's influence.[67] Machen immediately forsook his prestigious position at Princeton and founded Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as an institution that would remain in keeping with the positions of theologically conservative evangelicals.[68] Machen's decision to separate and establish a new seminary resulted from his refusal to compromise within the existing institutional or organizational structures at Princeton.[69] Machen's militancy against liberalist-modernist trends within U.S. Protestantism became an organizing principle that has persisted within the ethos of Westminster Theological Seminary since its inception. Some six decades later, Keller pursued doctoral studies and later became a professor at this same Westminster Theological Seminary. The Westminster ethos of aggressively defending traditional Protestant Christianity against modernizing trends profoundly influenced how Keller communicated his evangelical message to young urban professionals in late twentieth-century New York City.

While it seems beyond dispute that during the 1920s and 1930s the fundamentalists generated a robust subculture for themselves, Sutton offers a different perspective on the effect of the Scopes Trial. Sutton contends that this trial did not mark a shift in the impulse among the fundamentalists to exert influence over U.S. culture, but rather muddied the term "fundamentalism" without much interruption of the trajectory of the aspirations of this group to transform the broader culture. For Sutton, the most important legacy of the

---

[67] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 175.
[68] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 192.
[69] Nancy Ammerman, *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 1987), 4.

Scopes Trial was its role in shaping the public understanding of fundamentalism. Before Scopes, "fundamentalism" referred to a well-defined, close-knit apocalyptic movement largely unknown among people outside of religious and theological circles. The dramatic antics of Bryan and the withering critiques of Darrow and Mencken during the trial transformed "fundamentalism" into a pejorative term. The press, liberal intellectuals, and theological modernists weaponized this term as a label that could be readily deployed to characterize their adversaries as socially regressive, unenlightened, anti-science, and anti-education.

Sutton indicates that many fundamentalists at first tried to reclaim the term after the Scopes Trial before many completely abandoned the effort as futile.[70] As a result, during the latter 1920s and into the early 1940s, a lack of clarity persisted among evangelicals in the United States as to how to classify themselves. What counted as "true" evangelicalism was up for grabs. Marsden quotes Carl F. H. Henry (1913-2003), one of the significant figures of post-World War II U.S. evangelicalism, as stating that sometimes they referred to themselves as "evangelicals," particularly when they wanted to differentiate themselves from fundamentalists, but at other times they referred to themselves as "fundamentalists," usually when they wanted to form a united front in the debate against modernists.[71] To use Schäfer's apt description, during this period (and even to this day to some degree) the terms "evangelical" and "fundamentalist" occupied "a concentric semantic field."[72] This definitional looseness within U.S. evangelicalism would not be tightened up until the post-World War II era.

---

[70] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, xiii, 79, 176-177.
[71] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 10.
[72] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 19.

In light of Sutton's insights, the hypothesis that fundamentalists receded into obscurity after the Scopes Trial has been overstated. Instead, the fundamentalists persevered in their quest to integrate their evangelical brand within broader cultural currents and used their talents to occupy the nation through alliances with other social and political groups. Their self-imposed exile after the Scopes Trial inhibited their ability to have a hearing for their views within the marketplace of ideas and reinforced their self-perception as besieged outsiders who were increasingly at odds with a culture slipping away to the forces of evil. They functioned like guerilla warriors, thriving in their alternative universe one step removed from the mainstream American intellectual life where they were able to retreat after an attack and refine their theological ambitions and strategies to influence U.S. culture.[73]

The fundamentalists were never truly anti-intellectual. While Machen was still on the faculty at Princeton, some of the most important fundamentalist ministers of the interwar era attended this academically prestigious institution and came under his tutelage, including Harold Ockenga, Donald Grey Barnhouse, and Carl McIntire. Many of the early fundamentalists had advanced theological degrees from such respected schools as Yale, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Chicago. Their departure from these institutions into their own subculture resulted from their desire to have no truck with the established colleges that had succumbed to modernizing reforms that privileged science and scientific reasoning over the classics and moral philosophy. The generation of believers who came of age between the world wars tended to attend these alternate institutions of higher learning and were indoctrinated by monolithic faculties. They were not forced to

---

[73] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 150, 177.

engage with those who disagreed with them, which in turn left them unable to craft an intellectually persuasive case to outsiders for their evangelical brand.[74]

Although exiled to the cultural fringe during the interwar period after the Scopes Trial, the fundamentalists paradoxically retained a strong sense of "trusteeship" over American culture.[75] The harsh public shaming of the Scopes Trial did not persuade fundamentalists to relinquish their vision of a Christian America, and they did not retreat entirely from political activism as a means of influencing U.S. culture.[76] Their apocalyptic theology engendered them with an elevated sense of determination and passion, an uninhibited willingness to share what they loved and loathed, a sense of impatience with incremental reform, and a total intolerance for those who differed with them. They feared the same morally degenerate and chaotic social breakdown that had doomed Sodom and Gomorrah was afoot in the United States and that this slide toward perdition could only be halted through a moral crusade for the soul of contemporary culture.[77] Although the legacy of the Scopes Trial caused the next generation of evangelicals to change their strategies for social engagement, the core ambition to increase their cultural influence remained firmly lodged as they re-envisioned how to wage their moral crusade to transform people's hearts and the whole of U.S. society. This core ambition surfaced not only in the next generation of

---

[74] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 157-159.

[75] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 222-223.

[76] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 5. Interestingly, Daniel Williams has noted that after the Scopes Trial and when they lost their campaign to maintain Prohibition, the fundamentalists felt alienated from the nation's political institutions, but did not give up their political ambitions. The lack of receptivity to their demands by either of the major political parties during that era checked these ambitions and prompted them to reevaluate how to garner a broader political coalition. That would be the work of the post-World War II generation of evangelicals. Williams, *God's Own Party,* 4-5. Sutton also chronicles the sustained political engagement of fundamentalists after Scopes, as well as their frustration at fighting losing battles and having meager influence, if any, on the politics of either party. See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 179-189.

[77] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 116-117; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 2-3.

evangelicals, but also re-emerged within Keller's ministry in New York City some decades

later.

White Fundamentalists and the Racialized Social Order

When it came to race, the fundamentalist ambition to influence U.S. society has a

disturbing shadow side. During the early decades of the twentieth century, most white

fundamentalists included the maintenance of racial hierarchies and gender roles as a

feature of their moral crusade against the degeneration of U.S. society. During the interwar

period, *The Old Fashioned Revival Hour*, a nationally distributed fundamentalist radio

broadcast that featured the preaching of Charles Fuller, became a smash hit. Fuller

defended what he considered to be traditional, God-given gender roles and racial

privileges, reflecting the fears of many in the general public that perceived "others" would

contaminate American society with socialism, communism, and anarchy. Fuller and the

other white fundamentalists of this era also called for an overhaul of the nation's

immigration laws to reduce the number of "undesirables," mainly Catholics and Jews as

well as any non-Anglo immigrants, who could enter and weaken the nation.[78]

The wishes of these white fundamentalists seemed to come true with the passage of

the Johnson-Reed Act in 1924.[79] This legislation established quotas for incoming

immigrants based on national origins. The quota restricted visas to two percent of the

population of people with the same national origin who were already living in the United

States. The 1890 census was used to determine the number of people of a particular

---

[78] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 123.

[79] See generally "Major US Immigration Laws, 1790 to present," Migration Policy Institute, March 2013, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/timeline-1790; "The Immigration Act of 1924," Office of the Historian, Department of State of the United States of America, accessed on December 6, 2017, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act.

national origin currently living in the United States, which proved to be discriminatory against southern and eastern Europeans who did not arrive in the United States in greater numbers until after 1890.[80] As Madeline Hsu has pointed out, the Johnson-Reed Act also barred Asians from entry into the United States altogether. These restrictions had the de facto effect of limiting the number of non-white, non-Protestant immigrants and, according to Hsu, caused the United States to tilt away from being a country founded by "free immigrants" and toward a "gatekeeping nation" who denied access to populations perceived to be a threat to the white populations already living there.[81] The white fundamentalists of this period both reflected and reinforced the nativism and racial prejudice within white U.S. culture that served as the impetus for this legislation.

On the domestic front, white fundamentalists generally supported Jim Crow segregation, which brought them into alignment with the Klu Klux Klan. By the 1920s, the Klan had broadened their existing agenda of terrorizing African Americans to incorporate an animus toward immigrants, Catholics, urbanites, and intellectual elites as threats to the power of small-town, white, rural Protestantism.[82] Sutton does point out that some white fundamentalists did express qualms about working with the Klan, but Klansmen had no problem seeking alliances with white fundamentalists as they saw "eye-to-eye" on many social issues. Whatever qualms they might have had, white fundamentalists generally did not take a clear stance against the Klan as they did not want to alienate any segment of the population that might be responsive to their social agenda. As much as fundamentalists

---

[80] "Major US Immigration Laws," 3; "Immigration Act of 1924," Office of Historian.
[81] Madeline Y. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2015), 6, 8-17.
[82] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 125-129.

claimed to oppose the morals and values that pervaded early twentieth-century American culture, they conformed step-for-step with the white cultural mainstream on questions of gender and race. Their racial views mirrored those of most white Americans of any creed, treating African Americans as second-class citizens in alignment with the racialized social order enforced through the legal mandates of Jim Crow segregation.

Typical fundamentalists at that time were Anglo-Americans and northern European immigrants of a Protestant background who were part of the upwardly aspiring and "respectable" sector of the working class and of the lower middle-class. Even though fundamentalist churches had several successful business owners and financial tycoons along with some lower status white collar workers, they had a notable dearth of professionals from the emerging "knowledge sector" such as lawyers and teachers.[83] The lack of professionals within the fundamentalist movement was in sharp contrast to whom Keller's ministry in New York City would attract toward the end of the twentieth century. Keller targeted young urban professionals who worked in the knowledge sector, indicating his rebranded evangelical approach favored the middle- to upper-class more than the fundamentalists of the early twentieth century. Yet Keller's rebranded evangelical approach shared one major thing with the earlier fundamentalist brand. Most of the young urban professionals he gathered under his evangelical brand were white.

Although drawing on theologies similar to white fundamentalists, African American pastors and theologians of this era arrived at vastly different approaches to social engagement. While these African-American pastors and theologians led and joined black

---

[83] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 9.

liberation movements, white fundamentalists policed the color line with tenacity.[84]

Segregation was taken as a given among white fundamentalists. Billy Sunday, one of the

leading evangelists among white fundamentalists, maintained racially segregated revival

meetings, barring whites and African Americans from attending the same event. A local

African American pastor commented that the litany of sins Sunday recounted for both

audiences ignored "the devil of race prejudice, rotten, stinking, hell-born prejudice."[85]

White fundamentalists tended to see God's order, rather than human sinfulness, reflected

in racial inequalities and therefore did not recognize racial prejudice as a real problem.

Meanwhile, African American pastors of this era considered the equality of all people to

represent an essential component or "fundamental" of the gospel.[86] To illustrate this

divergence, white fundamentalists found spiritual deficiencies as the cause of the Great

Depression and blamed Roosevelt and his New Deal Liberalism for turning the country

away from God's plan for the United States. African American pastors saw something else

at work. R.C. Lawson, an influential African American preacher in New York, deemed the

Great Depression to be an expression of God's divine justice. It was a judgment on "the

terrible, atrocious things that happen down south, jim-crowism, lynching and prejudice to

darker brothers."[87] White fundamentalists generally turned a blind eye toward the

rampant racial oppression during the Jim Crow segregationist era. They simply did not see

---

[84] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 131. Even the Pentecostals, the most racially progressive of the radical evangelicals, regressed in the 1920s along the lines of racial segregation.

[85] Francis J. Grimke, "Billy Sunday Cowered before Race Prejudice in Washington," *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1918.

[86] Grimke, "Billy Sunday Cowered."; "Billy Sunday's Opportunity," *National Baptist Union Review*, November 24, 1917, 1.

[87] R.C. Lawson, "I Was Glad for Your Sake," *Contender for the Faith* (May 1935), 2. Interestingly, he proposed the same solution as the white fundamentalists, turning back to God. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 250.

racism or segregation as national sins from which they needed to repent or civil rights as something worthy of legislation.[88]

African American pastors who sympathized with the theological views of the white fundamentalists of this era also developed their own apocalyptic interpretations that differed significantly from those in the white-led premillennial movement. They combined the tradition of "black jeremiads" against racial injustice with prophetic interpretations of current events, longing for a day when injustice would end and they would rule with Christ during the new millennium. Rather than affirming the white premillennialist view that the Antichrist would soon take over a restored Roman Empire in Western Europe,[89] T.G. Steward used Daniel and Revelation to pontificate that the devilish tyrant would assume control of the United States. In fact, African American preachers argued that under white rule the tribulation has already begun for Native and African Americans. White premillennialists rarely saw calls for social equality in the Bible and showed little sensitivity to the kind of injustices experienced by their fellow African American Christian brothers and sisters. White fundamentalists also did not factor these racial injustices into their prophetic vision of signs that pointed to the coming tribulation. For white fundamentalists, the United States remained unwaveringly exceptional and more righteous than any other nation on earth. African Americans produced a counternarrative sensitive to social and racial injustice that offered a different image of the divine and an alternative

---

[88] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 250.

[89] Even when their apocalyptic predictions did not materialize after World War I, in the 1920s and 1930s, world events spurred a new sense of urgency among the apocalyptic fundamentalists. Benito Mussolini was planning to restore the Roman Empire, Adolf Hitler was driving Jewish people out of Europe, Joseph Stalin was institutionalizing state atheism, and an economic malaise had seemed to settle on nations everywhere. Fundamentalists saw in these circumstances, along with the celebration of immorality, the decline of creationism being taught in public schools, and the growing religious apostasy, a sign that the countdown to Armageddon had begun. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 205-208.

analysis of the supposed benevolence of the United States. Completely disregarding this counternarrative, white fundamentalists shaped their evangelical brand with their readings of prophecy and current events and effectively marginalized the alternative eschatological interpretations emerging from the African American community of pastors and theologians.[90]

The overt racism of several of the leading figures within the fundamentalist movement also dampened participation from racial minority groups, particularly African Americans. William Bill Riley serves as an example. Riley, a white Baptist pastor who spent most of his professional career in Minnesota, was one of the leading figures within the fundamentalist movement. In 1919, Riley tried to organize the fundamentalist movement by launching the World's Christian Fundamentals Association (WCFA) with the charter of identifying their differences with theological modernism and plotting strategies for building the movement in the future. Riley did not tolerate anyone other than white men within the membership of the WCFA and represented many of the most reprehensible elements within fundamentalism. As a cantankerous fundamentalist who "lashed out at his foes, real and imagined, with anti-Semitic, conspiratorial tirades," his overtones of racism and anti-Semitism imbued the WCFA.[91]

---

[90] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 63-66. Another factor limiting the influence of racial minority groups on the fundamentalist movement was the lack of formal training offered to these groups. Generally, Bible institutes attracted mostly white men and a smaller number of white women, reflecting the fundamentalist movement as a whole. Although western and northern schools did allow a token number of minority students to enroll, the leadership at these schools forced the African American students to live off campus rather than integrating the student housing offered to the white students. The southern schools remained white only. For example, the Dallas Colored Bible Institute (1928) was established as a separate institution that trained African Americans in the fundamentalist faith in line with Jim Crow segregationist practices. Even Wheaton, originally founded by abolitionist evangelicals who held progressive views on race, still admitted very few African American students during the first half of the twentieth century. This meant that tens of thousands of white people were trained in the premillennialist approach of the fundamentalists compared to only a handful of African Americans. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 154-156.

[91] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 220. See also Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 100.

Lyman Stewart, another leading figure within fundamentalism, reveals another variety of racial bias present within the movement. Stewart did not see the fundamentalist opposition to ethnic minorities' and immigrants' claims for civil rights as ignoring the pleas of the poor and oppressed.[92] Instead, Stewart reasoned that fundamentalists were offering a true liberation through faith in their understanding of the gospel as opposed to the false promises of the Social Gospel movement.[93] Stewart believed that social conditions would inevitably improve if people responded to the gospel promoted by the fundamentalists with changed hearts, a view shared by many others within fundamentalism. Unfortunately, this conception did little to disrupt the injustices of the racialized social order and effectively undermined generations of activism by nineteenth-century evangelicals who had often been leaders in social reform. Stewart also prioritized the voices of white male scholars and ministers in *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*, which Stewart published both to combat liberal theology and provide coherence for the fundamentalist movement.[94]

Although many African American pastors and churches shared their fundamental beliefs about the Christian faith, white fundamentalists were generally uninterested in cultivating African American allies or bringing them into the fundamentalist network. This led African American pastors to cite racism as one of the hallmarks of the white

---

[92] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 82.

[93] Sutton notes that fundamentalists lumped the Social Gospel movement in with the theological liberals, because they employed a hermeneutic that treated the Bible as a valuable tool offering truths that could be extracted to address the current social context. Fundamentalists would have none of this, insisting that the Bible was scientifically and historically accurate and that it provided the unchanging, immutable, and infallible guide to all of life. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 85.

[94] These white male scholars and ministers included Dixon, Torrey, A.T. Pierson, G. Campbell Morgan, Philip Mauro, James Gray, Robert Speer, L.W. Munhall, William Moorehead, W.H. Griffith Thomas, Charles Trumbull, Charles Erdman, C.I. Scofield, and Arno Gaebelein. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 83-86.

fundamentalist faith. Their view was reinforced by the reality that for all the preoccupation with making the United States a Christian nation, the fundamentalist movement was inattentive to and left unchanged the social and political issues besetting African American Christians. White fundamentalists neither needed nor wanted to consider how their historic and apocalyptic faith related to issues of racial injustice and discrimination. White fundamentalists' racial privilege and orientation fashioned how they read and taught the Bible and where they put their emphases and energy.[95] White fundamentalists chose modernism as their enemy, a movement that had been started by other white people both within theological circles and more broadly within U.S. society. The fundamentalist-modernist controversy then privileged white expressions of the Christian faith and ultimately could be understood as a battle to determine which of these white expressions would win out. This is an important point to keep in mind, because some seventy years later Keller reifies this historical fundamentalist-modernist conflict, and its privileging of white expressions of the Christian faith, by choosing "modernism" as the chief adversary for his evangelical message in New York City.

White fundamentalists of the early twentieth century also routinely criticized African Americans' quest for rights on the basis that it was code for gaining access to the bodies of white women. Even Ockenga, who was one of the few white fundamentalists to recognize that racism was a sin and opposed the racial priorities of the Immigration Act of 1924, was leery of race mixing within the context of marriage and sexual relationships.[96]

---

[95] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 109-112.

[96] Although he was not above the anti-Semitism pervasive within the fundamentalist movement. Part of Okenga's argument for the immorality of movies relied on his allegation that Jews ran Hollywood and injected anti-Christian messages into movies. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 121-122.

These statements and sentiments during the 1920s and 1930s ensured that African-American pastors would keep their distance from the fundamentalist movement, seeing white fundamentalists as far more likely to oppose their efforts to gain equality than to practice the social and racial egalitarianism they considered to be at the heart of the gospel. Sutton sums it up nicely: "As much as white fundamentalists liked to claim that they practiced the true, universal faith, it was a faith most often defined by race. Preparing individuals for the coming judgment meant maintaining rather than undermining white 'purity' and racial hierarchies."[97]

The white fundamentalists' culture war against the changing notions of gender, sex, and the family within U.S. culture had racial overtones as well. As women gained more and more equality, fundamentalists dedicated more and more time to restricting their roles at home and in the church. Many fundamentalist leaders, like Riley, Norris, and Straton, reacted with intense hostility against anything that threatened "manhood."[98] Any destabilization of women's "traditional" roles disturbed them, particularly the willingness of modern women to don clothing that revealed their legs (below the knee) and to wear shorter hair styles. The women's suffrage movement and women taking jobs outside of the home were pegged as another sign of last days degeneracy. Fundamentalists resisted these cultural trends by emphasizing the importance of having children and properly raising them as a means of preserving the traditional white Protestant foundations of the United States. If birth rates among white Americans declined, they reasoned, the massive

---

[97] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 137.
[98] Same-sex relationships, in particular, became a prototypical symbol of the nation's growing sexual depravity for fundamentalists as they linked the fate of the contemporary society in the United States to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 138.

immigration from eastern and southern Europe would imperil the purity of the white race in the United States.[99] Thus, the ensuing culture war fundamentalists waged to save the nation from these trends mirrored the racialized social order of white supremacy at the heart of American life from the outset, explicitly prioritizing white male interests and advantages within the United States.

The racial prejudices embedded within white fundamentalism were put on display during the 1928 election in which the Democratic Party nominated Al Smith, a Roman Catholic.[100] Over the first decades of the twentieth century, the political differences between northern and southern fundamentalists eroded as they paradoxically called for an activist, interventionist government on social and moral issues like Prohibition alongside their growing commitment to states' rights in education and social welfare. During the interwar period, fundamentalists aligned themselves more closely with economic and political conservatives in the Republican Party. Northerners always had these political leanings, but even Southerners who had been diehard Democrats began crossing over to the Republican Party with the nomination of Al Smith. Many of these southern fundamentalists were already displeased with the Democratic Party's efforts to court the vote of urban ethnic groups by catering to the needs of these immigrant communities. Al Smith represented the fruition of the shifting emphases within the Democratic Party. White fundamentalists, northern and southern, mobilized against Smith as the pope's shill and hated his anti-Prohibitionist stance. Smith also worked side-by-side with African

[99] Thus, fundamentalists also opposed birth control and abortion on these same grounds. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 141-142, 146.
[100] White fundamentalists held long-standing fears that Catholics were conspiring to take over the United States and allow the Pope, as a tool of the Antichrist, to assume control. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 195.

Americans on his campaign and in their neighborhoods, insinuating a measure of equality between the races that white fundamentalists found abhorrent. White fundamentalists then mobilized the vote against Smith by playing on southern racial fears and prejudices. For instance, Ben Bogard warned Southern Democrats that if they voted for Smith, they would essentially be supporting a "friend of negro rapists" and proponent of "negro equality."[101] By the end of the 1930s, northern and southern fundamentalists had begun the evangelical migration into the right wing of the G.O.P., which would come to its full fruition in the 1980s.

Asian Americans do not factor as heavily into the studies of evangelicalism during the fundamentalist era. Scant discussion of Asian Americans in this section does not result from prioritizing white and African American voices, but from the fact that Asian Americans do not factor heavily into evangelicalism within the United States until the latter three decades of the twentieth century. During the early part of the twentieth century, immigration laws explicitly excluded Asians from entering the country for certain periods and strictly limited the number of visas Asians could obtain. For most of U.S. history, Asians existed as "aliens ineligible for citizenship," a legal category that served as the building block for discriminatory legislation, such as the alien land laws of the western states during the first half of the twentieth century and the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, which barred the entry of Asians into the United States.[102] Congress had already passed the Chinese Exclusion Law in 1882 which restricted the entry of Chinese "laborers" except for certain exempt classes, namely students, merchants, merchant families, teachers, tourists,

---

[101] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 179, 201, 204.
[102] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 6.

and diplomats.[103] This historical exclusion of Asians from entry into the United States then severely limits Asian Americans from having any impact on evangelicalism during this period.

This does not mean that the fundamentalists of the interwar period ignored Asians. Some white fundamentalists favored the Chinese (so long as they did not try to immigrate to the United States), because American businesses had benefited from having access to lucrative markets in China as a result of the Open Door policy during the first half of the twentieth century.[104] Even when they feared that the Open Door policy of the United States might be funding the buildup of the Japanese war machine during the 1930s, these white fundamentalists still looked to China as a place to establish a foothold for Christian work around Asia.[105] African American pastors of this time period also fit Asians within their theological interpretations. Owen Troy, a prominent African American minister, predicted that Japan's militarism would lead to an Asian empire that would prompt a world war between the "dark" and "white" races. While the details remained vague, most fundamentalists recognized the conflict in Asia as leading to a global war that would eventually lead to Armageddon.[106] Having been inserted into white and African American

---

[103] During this period, all Chinese people who did not fit the exempt categories were deemed "laborers" for purposes of barring them from entry into the United States. Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 7.

[104] In 1899-1900, the U.S. Secretary of State John Hay advocated for a U.S. policy of promoting equal opportunity for international trade within China. Although this policy sought to maintain respect for China's administrative and territorial integrity, the larger purpose was to provide equal trading opportunities and prevent disputes among the other great world powers (Great Britain, France, Germany, Russia, and Japan) who had a physical and commercial presence in China. Although the policy was non-binding on these other world powers and hampered significantly during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900, it became the working foreign policy of the United States toward China. Ironically, this is the same time period when the United States was working to close the door on Chinese immigration, therefore limiting Chinese merchants from access to markets in the United States. "Secretary of State John Hay and the Open Door in China, 1899-1900," Office of the Historian, Department of State of the United States of America, accessed on December 7, 2017, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/hay-and-china.

[105] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 225-6.

[106] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 226.

apocalyptic interpretations, Asian Americans were rendered voiceless objects within the fundamentalist evangelical brand during the first part of the twentieth century. The lack of Asian American voices within U.S. evangelicalism persisted until the decades after the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965, which displaced considerations of race and national origins in immigration, instead prioritizing family reunification, employability, and refugees.[107] After 1965, large enough numbers of Asians were able to immigrate to the United States and had a recognizable influence on evangelicalism. For purposes of this dissertation, one important result of the immigration of Asians to New York City in the latter decades of the twentieth century was that a high percentage of Asian American young urban professionals joined their white counterparts in the pews at Redeemer's worship services during the 1990s. The broader Asian American influence within late twentieth century evangelicalism is discussed in the more detail in the last section of this chapter.

This section has traced the socio-historical development of the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism during the fundamentalist era of the early twentieth century. The fundamentalist leaders sought ever greater cultural influence for their fundamentalist evangelical brand as a means of stemming the tide of moral degeneracy and secularity inaugurated by early twentieth-century modernist developments such as higher biblical criticism and the theory of evolution. Yet for all their resistance to these cultural developments within early twentieth-century U.S. society, the fundamentalists remained in step with the racial prejudices held by the white Americans who came under their banner. To maintain their connection with their white audience, the

---

[107] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 10-11.

fundamentalists actively aligned their evangelical brand with the racialized social order of early twentieth-century U.S. society. In fact, many white fundamentalist leaders espoused overtly racist sentiments and therefore embedded the racial injustices of Jim Crow segregation within the fundamentalist evangelical brand.

The New Evangelical Era

By the 1940s, some 15 years after the credibility of fundamentalists among the general public had been torpedoed by the media coverage of the Scopes Trial, the next generation of evangelical leaders, some of whom had been affiliated with the fundamentalist movement, sought to rebrand themselves in an effort to distance themselves from the tainted fundamentalist brand. This next generation of evangelical leaders came to be known as the "new evangelicals." To rebrand, the new evangelicals needed to move away from the separatist and defensive tendencies of the interwar fundamentalist movement to emphasize instead a generalized evangelical orthodoxy, stressing the importance of personal evangelism as well as the necessity to exert a "redemptive" influence on the culture around them.[108] They rebooted the evangelical brand around a culturally sophisticated public image and a comprehensive political platform that included not only moral legislation, but also an internally coherent economic and foreign policy. Through this rebooted evangelical brand, the new evangelicals were able to form an expansive coalition that did indeed garner greater cultural influence for their evangelical political conservatism, eventually blossoming into what historians have referred to as the "Rise of the Republican Right" in the latter few decades of the twentieth century.[109]

---

[108] Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2000), 13.
[109] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 3-8; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 3-7.

This section describes this mid-twentieth-century evangelical rebranding. The new evangelicals retained the drive to gain greater cultural influence held by the fundamentalists of the early twentieth century. In spite of dramatic shifts in race relations within the mid-twentieth century, the new evangelicals geared their rebooted evangelical brand to appeal to the white middle-class. As a consequence, this rebooted evangelical brand reflected the racialized social order of mid-twentieth-century U.S. society just as the fundamentalist evangelical brand had reflected the racialized social order of the early twentieth century. The new evangelical leaders then repeated the pattern that had begun during the early twentieth century by linking the drive for greater cultural influence for their evangelical brand with allowing their evangelical brand to reflect the prevailing racialized social order. The new evangelical iteration of this recurring pattern provides the next step in this socio-historical analysis that ultimately places Keller's ministry in New York City as the final expression of this recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism.

The Rebranding Project of the New Evangelicals

In 1940, a group of white fundamentalist leaders gathered in Chicago at the Moody Bible Institute to wrestle in private with the relationship between the scriptures and the world events. Attendees included William Ward Ayer, J. Oliver Buswell, Charles Fuller, David Fuller, H.A. Ironside, Robert Ketcham, Robert McQuilkin, Harold John Ockenga, and L. Sale Harrison. These white fundamentalist leaders emerged with a renewed faith that God wanted them to redirect the trajectory of their nation as war loomed in the distance, blaming the collapse of civilization on a departure from God's revealed truth to embrace

the "isms, such as statism, classism, and racism."[110] They were also frustrated with the lack of engagement and credibility their fundamentalist movement had within the mainstream culture in the United States since the Scopes Trial. They wanted their evangelistic efforts to have broader appeal with the public and hoped to regain influence in the cultural and ecclesiastical mainstream.[111] Thus, they engaged in a rebranding program that retained the same basic theological commitments and vision for U.S. society as the previous generation while presenting themselves as a more winsome group to the public at large.

The first major step in this rebranding was the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).[112] In 1942, the Reverend Dr. Harold J. Ockenga of Boston's Park Street Congregational Church assembled a group of religious leaders in St. Louis who sought to recover the tradition of rigorous intellectual inquiry within their own religious worldview, which would in turn empower them to enter the public square with renewed confidence.[113] They wanted to set aside the emphasis on separatist purity and were open to forming broad interdenominational coalitions as a means to promote evangelistic revival.[114] These leaders consisted of powerful and influential white fundamentalist men from across the entire nation, including William Ward Ayer, L. Nelson Bell, John Bradbury, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Percy Crawford, William Culbertson, Charles Fuller, Frank Gaebelein, Dan Gilbert, Will Houghton, H.A. Ironside, Bob Jones, Harold Ockenga, Harry Rimmer, Paul Rood, Bob Shuler, J. Roswell Flower.[115] Together with Ockenga, these white men, whom

---

[110] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 231.
[111] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 233.
[112] The NAE is still in existence to this day. See their website for more information at https://www.nae.net.
[113] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 6.
[114] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 20.
[115] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 286. Although not at that time the towering figure he would later become, Billy Graham was at this gathering in St. Louis as well. Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 6.

historians have referred to as the "new evangelicals," founded the NAE, an event that several scholars have marked as the inception of the modern evangelical movement.[116] This group discarded the term "fundamentalist" in favor of the more historic (and generic) label "evangelical" intentionally as a measure to disassociate themselves from the pejorative public image that had dogged them since the Scopes Trial.

In his attempts to reach out to the young urban professionals of New York City, Keller repeated this pattern four decades later by trying to prevent his ministry in New York City from being described as "evangelical." By the late 1980s, the term "evangelical" carried connotations that Keller believed would repel rather than attract young urban professionals in New York City, so Keller engaged in a rebranding project of his own, explicitly setting aside the "evangelical" descriptor for the even more generic label of "Christian." Through these actions, both Keller and this group of new evangelicals wanted to position their evangelical brands to represent the "true" Christian faith, which, in turn, would augment their ability to gather a large segment of the white, middle-class population under their banner.

As the first president of the NAE, Ockenga rallied the "unvoiced multitudes"[117] into action by instilling U.S. evangelicalism with the decades-long cross-fertilization of conservative political ideology, free market economics, and fundamentalist theology. He named the following as evils that would cause "annihilation" unless their group went on the offensive against them: Roman Catholicism, theological liberalism, secularism (and the

---

[116] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 6; Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 6; Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 9. Although recognizing that most historians consider the formation of the NAE as the first step in the reconstruction of a new, modern evangelicalism, Sutton sees the formation of the NAE as the logical culmination of decades of work and growing trends within the previous fundamentalist movement. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 286.
[117] This harkens to Nixon's "silent majority." See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 287.

break-up of the moral fiber of the American people), and the growth of government under the New Deal which he later termed "statism."[118] The core members of the NAE believed God had appointed them to serve as guardians of the nation so that the Spirit would usher in revival.[119] They were appointed to give Americans a clear choice—return to God or face God's wrath. While they further developed the already flourishing evangelical subculture and stayed loyal to the "fundamentals of fundamentalism," these new evangelicals repudiated both the separatism and militant approach to cultural engagement of the previous generation, ultimately attempting to steer their evangelical brand back toward the culturally centrist position it occupied during the nineteenth century in the U.S.[120] Sutton makes the important point that the founders of the NAE crafted a culturally savvy, professional coalition that sanded down fundamentalism's rough edges enough to transform the dispersed, decentralized movement of the previous generation into one "carefully directed by a powerful and culturally influential white male elite."[121]

To develop their more culturally savvy and professional image, the new evangelicals needed a more nuanced and intellectual challenge of modern culture that would have more credibility with people in the cultural mainstream.[122] Carl F. H. Henry was a key architect of

---

[118] Harold J. Ockenga, "The Unvoiced Multitudes," sermon manuscript, April 1942, quoted in Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 287. Although Dochuk indicates that evangelicals in Southern California during the 1930s and 1940s were actually aligned within the New Deal Coalition before the mass migration of evangelicals from the South to California during the 1950s and 1960s. See Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, Kindle location 310-320.

[119] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 20.

[120] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 6. Wuthnow describes this in terms of these new evangelicals being more "pragmatic" than the previous generation of fundamentalists in that they were more concerned with using their resources to evangelize the world rather than maintain their purity through strict separation from the world. Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1998), 178.

[121] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 295. Williams also notes that because the NAE made fighting communism a priority, the political power of these culturally savvy white males was particularly enhanced during the Cold War period. Williams, *God's Own Party*, 4-5.

[122] Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 24.

this revitalized intellectual engagement with U.S. culture.[123] Henry had attended Wheaton

College in the early 1940s with Billy Graham, earned a doctorate from Boston University,

and served on the founding faculty at Fuller Theological Seminary and as the first editor of

Christianity Today. Upon his death in 2003, the *New York Times* referred to him as the

"brain" of the evangelical movement.[124] In 1947, Henry critiqued American

fundamentalism and laid a new agenda for the future in *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern*

Fundamentalism, in which he lamented that fundamentalism had been divorced from the

great social reform movements, such as fighting the "injustices of the totalitarianisms, the

secularisms of modern education, the evils of racial hatred, the wrongs of current labor-

management relations, the inadequate bases of international dealings."[125] Henry wanted to

distance post-war evangelicalism from all the failed prophecy, ugly racism, and

embarrassing internal squabbles of the interwar years, even though his anticommunist

sensibilities, conservative politics, apocalyptic premillennialism, and vision for rebuilding

the evangelical movement had a lot in common with his interwar fundamentalist

predecessors.[126] Yet Henry eschewed the hostile militancy and separatism of the

fundamentalists, calling for evangelicals to abandon a purely pietistic position and re-

engage with their surrounding society by reclaiming and refining their heritage to foster a

---

[123] Ockenga actively promoted Henry's views as the intellectual heart of the new evangelical movement. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 167.

[124] Laurie Goodstein, "Rev. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, 90, Brain of Evangelical Movement," *New York Times*, December 13, 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/13/us/rev-dr-carl-f-h-henry-90-brain-of-evangelical-movement.html

[125] Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947), 36. Balmer describes *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* as a "kind of manifesto" for Carl F. H. Henry's call for the re-engagement of culture by evangelicals. Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 50.

[126] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 295.

formidable social, political, and intellectual agenda.[127] The new evangelicals employed intellectually engaged arguments like those of Henry in an effort not only to distinguish themselves from the previous generation, but also to claim a winsome public image for their evangelical brand. Following this blueprint, Keller too employed intellectually engaged arguments to promote a winsome public image for his retooled evangelical brand within late twentieth-century New York City. Neither Keller nor the new evangelicals intended to change the underlying theology or cultural aspirations of the previous generation, but to rebrand the previous generation's version of the evangelical faith to gain broader appeal with their target audience.

The rebranding project of the new evangelicals encountered a significant snag at the outset as some did not want to cede the claim to the "true" evangelical faith to these NAE leaders. For all their confidence, the NAE leaders simply could not bring the remaining self-identifying fundamentalists into the fold.[128] Not everyone saw the need to employ a different strategy with respect to their cultural engagement or tone down the hard edge of their apocalyptic theological message. In 1941, just before the official launch of the NAE, Carl McIntire, a fiery, tyrannical preacher who studied with Ockenga under Machen at Princeton during the late 1920s, launched the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), urging fundamentalists to separate from mainstream culture and assume hardline, uncompromising positions.[129] Ammerman notes that for all the similarities in their

---

[127] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 50; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 233. Although Sutton recognizes that historians and evangelicals have largely accepted Henry's vision of the past and his call for a new, culturally engaged evangelicalism, Sutton argues that Henry mischaracterized pre-World War II fundamentalism, which was already actively involved in cultural engagement, to disavow the past. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 295.

[128] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 289.

[129] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 288-289. A common perception among scholars is that the ACCC and NAE represent a splintering of evangelicalism into two distinct movements within the twentieth century in the

theological doctrine, the approach of the ACCC to cultural engagement could not have been more radically divergent from the approach of the NAE.[130] For the members of the ACCC, the entire modern world and modern theology must be resisted at all costs and compromise in either doctrine or lifestyle was considered anathema. In fact, members of the ACCC opted for a strict separatist position and generated a subculture that was strictly demarcated from the surrounding society.[131] They abhorred the willingness of the new evangelicals to seek alliances with sympathizers in mainstream Protestant denominations, which they regarded as hopelessly liberal in theology, and insisted that complete separation should be a litmus test of true faith.[132] To the members of the ACCC, the new evangelicals were "weak-kneed and heretical."[133] The tension between these two groups illustrates the intra-group contest within twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism to control which brand counts as "true." It is important to point out that both of these groups were led by white males, which means whites ultimately controlled the contest within twentieth-century evangelicalism to stake claims for which evangelical brand counted as orthodox Christianity's true representatives and heirs.

The leaders of the NAE proved to be more successful in asserting their evangelical brand within this contested space, as the public perception of mainstream evangelicalism

---

United States. See Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 23; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 233. However, as these same scholars all recognize that the doctrinal positions of these two groups remain similar, they will both be considered differing variations within the same movement of evangelicalism in the twentieth-century United States. For scholars who do not break the fundamentalists of the ACCC and the new evangelicals of the NAE into distinct movements, but rather group them together under the banner of evangelicalism, see Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 3-68; Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 263-325.

[130] Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 24.

[131] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 3; Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 289.

[132] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 233.

[133] Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 24. The new evangelicals did not simply let this stand, labeling the members of the ACCC as "hard-hearted and obnoxious." Ammerman, *Bible Believers*, 24.

in the United States became associated with their evangelical brand during the mid- to late-twentieth century.[134] By the late 1950s, these new evangelicals had secured enough sociocultural legitimacy, theological authority, internal unity, and political coalition to exert an enormous amount of cultural influence within the United States.[135] The strategy of the new evangelicals had paid off. Their willingness to work toward consensus in the postwar age, to refrain from the squabbling of the previous periods, to soften the hard edges of the interwar fundamentalism, and to build bridges across denominational divides yielded them a much wider social sphere than either the ACCC or the previous generation of fundamentalists. Yet tensions existed around conflicting objectives even within the new evangelical movement. They attempted to balance between an initiative toward ecumenical inclusiveness, intellectual legitimacy, mass appeal, and integration into mainstream society against a desire to preserve a subcultural identity clearly demarcated from the liberal and modernist camps. The NAE reflected these conflicting impulses. On one hand, they organized lobbying efforts in Washington, set up a clearinghouse for legislative campaigns, coordinated relief and missionary work, spawned powerful parachurch agencies, and fostered the training of conservative Christians for government. On the other, doctrinal fragmentation, the association's loose organizational features, its financial shortfalls, and its failure to draw in some of the larger denominations prevented the forging of a

---

[134] Sutton notes that the ACCC over time came to represent the polemical far right of the fundamentalist movement. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 289. See also Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 62-65. In fact, Sutton argues that the break with the irascible McIntire actually helped the NAE makes gains among the general public as its leaders were able to distance themselves from the cantankerous and divisive past of the fundamentalists of the 1920s, represented by the ACCC, and portray themselves with a different and more respectable image to the public. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 289.

[135] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 63.

univocally dominant evangelical unity and authority.[136]

The emergence of Billy Graham as "America's evangelist" during the second half of the twentieth century offered to the public the illusion of a settled image of what it meant to be a "true" evangelical, thereby amassing maximal cultural influence for the rebranded evangelicalism of the new evangelicals. Coming into his own after World War II, Graham was not tainted by the fundamentalist controversies of the interwar period like some of the other major figures within the new evangelical movement.[137] Graham represented the rebranded evangelicalism that wanted to leave behind the internecine internal squabbles and shrill social critiques of the previous generation and sought to appeal to outsiders through a more winsome and respectable public presentation.[138] During the 1950s and 1960s, Graham became the greatest booster of this rebranded evangelicalism, working tirelessly to build the movement with Henry, Ockenga, and Fuller through consciously evangelical institutions like Fuller Theological Seminary and *Christianity Today*.[139] In spite of his deep-seated anti-statism, Graham supported Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, revealing an "evangelistic pragmatism" as characteristic of the new evangelical brand. This evangelistic pragmatism allowed Graham to suppress his political principles in favor of gaining access to those in power. While waging a relentless fight against communism and

---

[136] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 63-64. Another instance of this internal conflict is demonstrated in the ministry of Billy Graham, whom Sutton deemed the "leading spokesman" for the evangelicalism in the post-World War II United States, at his 1957 Crusade in New York City. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 303. See the following chapter for more on this 1957 Crusade.

[137] Two key figures who played instrumental roles in the new evangelical movement and yet were scarred by association with the post-Scopes Trial fundamentalists were Harold Ockenga and Charles Fuller. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 327. Although Marsden does make clear that even though Graham and his generation reclaimed the term "evangelical" for themselves, Graham was himself a "purebred fundamentalist" in terms of his theology. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 167.

[138] Ockenga heralded Graham as "the spokesman of the convictions and ideals of the new evangelicalism." Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 167.

[139] He also founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association to promote this rebranded approach to evangelicalism. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 330.

deciphering the foreboding signs of the times with his radio and crusade audiences,

Graham masterfully blended the apocalyptic theology of his fundamentalist predecessors

with an irenic disposition and engaging public persona. Graham achieved the cultural

influence the evangelical leaders had been yearning for, advising presidents, meeting with

foreign leaders, and counseling political policy-makers.[140] As the public face of new

evangelicalism and through his personal embodiment of its most distinctive attributes,[141]

Graham made the postwar rebranding of the public image of evangelicalism look like a

staggering success and provided a powerful symbol through which the definition of

evangelicalism could be controlled.[142]

Two other vehicles that the leaders of the NAE used to control the public image of

evangelicalism were Fuller Theological Seminary and *Christianity Today*. Fuller Seminary

began as a consciously American evangelical institution. In 1946, Charles Fuller decided to

organize a new Christian school to focus on missions and evangelism in an effort to offer

the intellectually sophisticated, culturally relevant faith for which the evangelicals were

clamoring. After recruiting Ockenga and Wilbur Smith to help with this project, Fuller

Theological Seminary was born.[143] Ockenga served as its first president and Everett

Harrison (PhD, University of Pennsylvania), Carl F.H. Henry (PhD, Boston University), and

Harold Lindsell (PhD, New York University) joined as the initial faculty.[144] In 1947, Fuller

---

[140] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 51-52. Williams points out that Graham was able to maintain friendships with presidents of radically different views and approaches, such as Lyndon Baines Johnson and Richard Nixon. Williams, *God's Own Party*, 3-4.

[141] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 235.

[142] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 327.

[143] As noted earlier, Billy Graham was instrumental in the founding of Fuller Theological Seminary. For more details on Graham's role, see Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 27; Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 1-11, 155-167.

[144] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 317.

Theological Seminary opened its doors to its first matriculating class and Ockenga gave an inaugural address that encapsulated his life's work. In that address, he presented white evangelical culture as the bulwark against the forces of secularism, socialism, and moral decadence and set the tone for Fuller Seminary's approach to cultural engagement. Marsden notes that Fuller Seminary, now one of the most distinctive institutions within U.S. evangelicalism, was shaped not only by Ockenga, but by the personalities of all of its founders and initial stakeholders.[145] Regarded as private property and not accountable to any ecclesiastical authority, Fuller was managed by a tight-knit group of white evangelical males who designed the institution to form the new evangelical brand and promote it as the "true," or at least the most appealing, form of evangelicalism to the American public. Fuller Seminary then reflected their desire to raise up a new generation of evangelicals who would be able to offer a more palatable, intellectually grounded evangelical faith to the mainstream population within the United States. Fuller Seminary then helped the new evangelicals inch away from the anti-intellectual image associated with fundamentalism, while still remaining loyal to the underlying theological commitments of fundamentalism.[146]

Shedding the anti-intellectual image of the fundamentalists became a theme that Keller also took up in his evangelical ministry in New York City during the late twentieth century. By crafting an apologetic engagement technique within his preaching,[147] Keller took his evangelical brand much farther away from that of the fundamentalists than the new evangelicals had. Not content simply to disassociate his evangelical brand from anti-

---

[145] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 2.
[146] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 2-3, 167.
[147] This apologetic engagement technique is described more fully in chapter three.

intellectualism, Keller outdid the new evangelicals of the mid-twentieth century by using his apologetic engagement technique to portray his evangelical brand as more intellectually coherent than any other religious or secular approach available to the young urban professionals of late twentieth-century New York City.

By the mid-1950s, white evangelicals had an advocacy group in the NAE, a professional graduate training school in Fuller Theological Seminary, and a new generation of media savvy, charismatic, smart ministers and evangelists dedicated to expanding the movement beyond the evangelical subculture. Yet they still lacked a consistent platform from which to control the mainstream cultural conversation on evangelicalism. Graham believed that a new magazine could meet this need and co-founded *Christianity Today* with Harold Ockenga in 1956. Graham hoped *Christianity Today* would "restore intellectual respectability and spiritual impact to evangelical Christianity" and help to distance evangelicalism from the negative stereotypes and anti-intellectualism and cultural detachment that had dogged it since the Scopes Trial.[148] Graham wanted evangelicalism to present a positive and constructive program that would lead and love, rather than vilify, criticize, and beat down, others. To that end, Carl F. H. Henry was brought in as the founding editor. Graham and Ockenga had confidence that Henry would steer *Christianity Today* clear of petty theological squabbles and inward-looking pietism and instead focus the magazine on intellectual engagement with the larger social and political culture in the United States.[149]

Christianity Today became the ideal venue to promote their evangelical brand and

---

[148] Billy Graham, *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 286.
[149] Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 233.

efforts to bring revival to the United States, remind the nation of its Christian foundations, and promote a political conservatism that exalted individual faith, free markets, and anti-statism.[150] *Christianity Today's* headquarters were located in Washington, D.C., and Henry insisted that the magazine was committed to the principles of the new evangelical brand instead of either political party. Over time the magazine achieved Graham's original aspirations, becoming a respectable forum for broadly defined evangelical debate and discussion. Sutton notes that *Christianity Today* has become the "most significant voice of modern evangelicalism."[151] Lindsay refers to *Christianity Today* as the "flagship magazine" for evangelicals in the United States.[152] The *Washington Post* has echoed Lindsay in naming *Christianity Today* as "evangelicalism's flagship magazine,"[153] and the *New York Times* has indicated that it is the "mainstream evangelical magazine."[154] *Christianity Today*, along with Fuller Seminary, has functioned as a key vehicle for influencing the conversation about and controlling the public image of evangelicalism within the United States in the latter half of the twentieth century. In fact, during the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century, *Christianity Today* devoted several articles to featuring Keller's ministry to young urban professionals in Manhattan. For all his attempts to distance Redeemer Presbyterian Church from an "evangelical" label, these articles in *Christianity Today* nonetheless firmly

---

[150] As is further elaborated in the next section, Sutton notes that the politics of these new evangelicals indirectly (if not directly) discouraged attempts to alter the subordinate status of women and racial and ethnic minorities. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 322.

[151] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 320, 322. Sutton notes that by 1967, *Christianity Today* boasted just under 150,000 thousand paid subscribers and today the magazine claims 600,000 print readers in addition to millions more who follow the magazine through its website.

[152] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 7.

[153] Jacob Lupfer, "Why a 'Yes' to Gays Is Often a 'No' to Evangelicalism," *Washington Post*, June 10, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/why-a-yes-to-gays-is-often-a-no-to-evangelicalism-commentary/2015/06/10/d8657e06-0fa6-11e5-a0fe-dccfea4653ee_story.html?utm_term=.5e9b96a87e5d.

[154] John Leland, "New Cultural Approach for Conservative Christians: Reviews, Not Protests," *New York Times*, December 26, 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/26/movies/new-cultural-approach-for-conservative-christians-reviews-not.html.

assigned Keller's ministry a place within the evangelical family. Such has been the enduring

standing of *Christianity Today* as a vehicle for defining the public face of evangelicalism.

These efforts to rebrand evangelicalism allowed the rehabilitation of the public

image and reputation of evangelicalism to occur with surprising rapidity. Billy Graham rose

to national prominence as the winsome symbol of evangelicalism only twenty-five years

after the Scopes Trial. It took only another twenty-six more years for the U.S. to elect Jimmy

Carter, a born-again Southern Baptist, as president, prompting *Newsweek* to proclaim 1976

the "Year of the Evangelical."[155] As early as the late 1950s, the growing group gathered

under the rebranded evangelicalism of the new evangelicals were convinced that the

Christian nation they had long dreamed of creating was finally within reach.[156] Although

these new evangelicals undoubtedly relished the escalating cultural influence of their

rebranded evangelicalism within the political sphere, the association of their rebranded

evangelicalism with political conservatism happily embraced by the new evangelicals

would later pose challenges for Keller as he reached out to young urban professionals in

New York City during the late twentieth century.

New Evangelicalism As A Cultural Balm for White America

Yet for all these advances in the rehabilitation of the public image of evangelicalism

during the latter half of the twentieth century, the new evangelicals repeated the pattern

begun by the early twentieth-century fundamentalists of reflecting the prevailing racialized

social order in the United States. While their efforts to control the public image of

evangelicalism met with a fair measure of success, the white new evangelicals tended to

---

[155] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 239.
[156] Williams, *God's Own Party*, 5.

marginalize, if not completely ignore, the voices and experiences of people of color who for the most part shared their theological views. For all the gains they made in securing increased cultural influence for their rebranded evangelicalism, the white new evangelicals followed the fundamentalists in failing to use that cultural influence to address the pernicious racial injustice that plagued U.S. society. Instead, the white new evangelicals again prioritized attracting the white middle-class to their rebranded evangelicalism and therefore allowed their evangelical brand to reflect the racialized social order of the mid-twentieth century.

Post-war new evangelicals remained as divided from their fellow African American pastors as the previous generation of white fundamentalists. African American preachers, such as Charles Barbour, saw the calamity of World War II as comeuppance for the social sins of the United States. Discrimination and violence against people of color had provoked God's wrath, and white Americans needed to atone for their sins of racial injustice. Evangelist James Webb actively promoted the view that World War II served as God's judgment on humanity for its sins and that the Almighty would use the war to overturn global racial hierarchies. During World War II, African American church leaders had organized a "Double-V campaign" that strove for victory over both fascism abroad and racism at home. White evangelicals of any brand, whether fundamentalist or new evangelical, ignored this movement for the most part.[157]

Although never shy about naming divine-wrath-provoking sins within U.S. society, new evangelicals at the end of World War II simply failed to recognize racism in the United States as a possible source of divine anger and retribution. Furthermore, new evangelicals

---

[157] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 274-278, 299.

showed little sympathy for Japanese Americans who had been transferred into internment

camps throughout the western United States. Along with most white Americans, many the

new evangelicals enthusiastically supported the internment. The leaders of the NAE did not

dislodge the unsettling racism of the previous generation, retaining positions on women's

roles and race consistent with the past white fundamentalists. The all-white organizers of

the NAE not only made little effort to recruit African Americans, or any other people of

color, as part of their new evangelical coalition, they included outspoken white

segregationists among their number and courted explicitly segregated denominations.

These actions served to associate generalized evangelicalism with the white supremacist

culture of the United States.[158] As a result, African Americans remained as alienated from

the new evangelical brand as they had been from the fundamentalist brand.[159]

      In spite of their alienation from the new evangelical brand, Beulah identifies some

African American pastors and theologians, such as Tom Skinner, William E. Parnell, and

John Perkins, who remained partial to the basic theology of evangelicalism and ultimately

wanted to reclaim evangelicalism as a vehicle for establishing racial justice. Beulah

indicates that these African American pastors and theologians intentionally referred to

themselves as "black evangelicals."[160] They created parallel evangelical organizations, such

as the National Black Evangelical Association, that consciously incorporated racial justice

into their charter.[161] Essentially, black evangelicals could be understood as developing yet

---

[158] Miller, "The Rise of African-American Evangelicalism," 259-262; Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13.
[159] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 279, 286-287.
[160] They used this term not only to disassociate themselves from the generalized evangelicalism that had been compromised by its association with whiteness, but also from the progressive or liberationist theological views of other African American theologians such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Cone. Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13.
[161] Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 10.

another evangelical brand and competing against the new evangelical and fundamentalist brands to claim the status of "true" evangelicalism. Of course, black evangelicals did not have much chance of wresting away "true" evangelical status from any white expression of evangelicalism as their viewpoint was completely ignored, if not actively suppressed, by leaders of both the new evangelicals and the fundamentalists.

During the post-war period, black evangelicals joined other African American Christians and renewed their common fight for civil rights. They "called, protested, boycotted, and died for an end to Jim Crow segregation."[162] White new evangelicals paid little attention to these calls for racial justice from their African American brothers and sisters in Christ, mirroring the views of their predecessors that God had intended for the races to be separate. The anti-statism that Ockenga and others had pumped into the new evangelical brand reinforced the reluctance of white evangelicals to act on civil rights issues or support the nascent civil rights movement. They remained highly suspicious of the federal government's attempts to encourage integration, perceiving these attempts as an initiative to usher in socialism.[163] Almost a decade after the conclusion of World War II, white evangelicals denounced *Brown v. Board* of education with such figures as Dan Gilbert decrying the decision as a "gross immorality and lawlessness that will be characteristic of

---

[162] Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 45.

[163] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 306. In the 1930s, white fundamentalists interpreted Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to expand the power of the federal government and his internationalist inclinations within the context of their end-times expectations, believing that Roosevelt and his administration were tools of the devil to bring about the reign of the Antichrist. Roosevelt personified the liberal, urban progressivism that these white fundamentalists abhorred. They also believed that Eleanor Roosevelt, a longtime progressive reformer, was either a socialist or a communist and loathed her as a symbol of women's mobility and freedom rather than strictly as a domestic partner for men. See Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 232-237.

the last days."[164] For all their talk of a new cultural engagement, Sutton notes that these post-war evangelicals remained stuck in the racial prejudices of the past. Sutton further indicates that when Henry denounced evangelicals' failure to stand up to racial prejudice, "he was primarily referring to Hitler's treatment of Jews, not white Americans' treatment of African Americans."[165] As these all-white leaders of the NAE aspired toward, and eventually achieved, increased cultural influence upon mainstream U.S. society, they offered white Americans a pathway for holding onto the power they thought they were losing in the face of growing pluralism, secularism, and diversity.[166]

Graham provides an example of how his rebranded evangelicalism offered white Americans this pathway for maintaining cultural superiority. Graham's book *World Aflame* (1965) set forth his positions on the great social and political issues of that era. *World Aflame* named hydrogen bombs, the population explosion, increasing crime, sexual perversion, homosexuality, immorality, dependence on pills and alcohol, political turmoil, and a lack of true faith as signs of the end times. Additional signs included the controversial movements of feminism, civil rights, and the battle against communism. Sutton notes that *World Aflame* revealed how most white evangelicals in the 1960s understood the dramatic changes occurring within U.S. society. In addition, Graham, like most white evangelicals, saw the interventionist foreign policy of the United States during the Cold War as an

---

[164] Dan Gilbert was a fundamentalist evangelist of the mid-twentieth century. For other white evangelicals' pejorative assessments of *Brown v. Board of Education*, see Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 307.

[165] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 307.

[166] Millions of white Americans from Florida, Texas, and California in particular saw in evangelicalism an attractive faith that also spoke to their political ideals. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 308-310. For more description on the influence of "southern evangelicals" on the religious landscape within southern California, see Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, Kindle location 1-24.

essential part of the campaign against communism and atheism.[167] Along with the other white evangelicals of the NAE, Graham helped Americans make sense of the perceived threats from the Soviet Union as an epic battle of good and evil, right against wrong. Eschewing decades of American isolationism, evangelical leaders urged their national representatives to assume unilateral global leadership and to reconstruct the world in the image of what these new evangelicals considered to be a Christian America. Articles in *Christianity Today* reinforced faith in the righteousness of the United States in leading the battle against global communism. As the catastrophe in Vietnam forced Americans to question whether the U.S. was indeed a nation chosen by God or just another corrupt nation-state, the white evangelical appeal to God and country during this time resonated with the many white Americans already disillusioned by the rapid social changes related to race and gender that began in the 1960s.[168]

While Graham's evangelical message and ministry provided a cultural balm of sorts for white America, scholars have also pointed out that he did exhibit a measure of social progressivism as to race. During the 1950s and 1960s, when many white evangelical communities and institutions were resisting racial desegregation, Graham made the bold move to integrate his evangelistic campaigns. In fact, he proved to be a pioneer in White-African American race relations among his new evangelical peers, launching his first integrated crusade in Chattanooga, Tennessee in 1953.[169] Graham eventually came to believe that opposition to racism was a valid cause for the new evangelical movement,

---

[167] Graham even went so far as to openly support the Vietnam War as an essential step to take in the fight against the spread of atheism. Ockenga shared this sentiment, writing President Johnson to complain that he was not waging the war against communism in Vietnam vigorously enough. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 330-331.

[168] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 295, 332.

[169] Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 253.

ultimately deciding to lend his support to Lyndon Johnson's Civil Rights Act in 1964.[170]

Williams characterizes Graham, and the other white evangelicals who followed his lead, as

taking a moderate position on issues of race and offering "cautious support" to the civil

rights legislation.[171] While Graham and the other new evangelicals were forging alliances

with centrist Republicans such as Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon, self-identifying

fundamentalists of the latter twentieth century such as Bob Jones, Jr., Jerry Falwell, and

other prominent southern radio evangelists broke with Billy Graham and the NAE. This

group gravitated more toward political candidates who reflected their direct opposition to

civil rights, such as Strom Thurmond and Barry Goldwater.[172] The division again reveals

the contest among differing evangelical factions to define what it means to be a "true"

evangelical in the post-war United States. Furthermore, this contest to control the

dominant evangelical brand, and thereby gain a highly increased position of cultural

influence, privileges white expressions of evangelicalism to such a high degree that racial

minority views on evangelicalism are excluded from meaningful participation in the

contest.

New Evangelicalism and the Rise of the Republican Right

The overtly racist position of the self-identifying southern fundamentalists

relegated them to the fringes of the political process during the 1950s. However, after the

1960s and 1970s, southern fundamentalists were able to bring Graham's white

evangelicals back into their political fold after various Supreme Court decisions seemed to

---

[170] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 74.
[171] Williams, *God's Own Party*, 5. Williams also points out that the southern fundamentalist strain within evangelicalism continued to focus their energies on lambasting the civil rights movement as a communist plot.
[172] Williams, *God's Own Party*, 6.

be at odds with mainstream evangelical values.[173] As the Republicans reframed their party identity with a narrative of supplanting moral threat with moral restoration, these southern fundamentalists redefined their vision of a Christian nation as anti-secular and launched a second political mobilization based on culture wars that appealed to the more centrist, white evangelicals who shared their concern over the moral decline of the United States.[174] This movement of the South from a self-consciously separate region to a more integral part of national culture is considered to be one of the most important cultural developments in the United States from the 1930s to the 1970s.[175] This rise of the South came about after these evangelical leaders learned to reframe their politics as "believer versus secularist."[176] The efforts of these southern fundamentalists in the 1980s successfully mobilized a substantial political voting bloc that eventually became known as the "Republican Right" during the latter decades of the twentieth century.[177] The alignment

---

[173] Balmer cites two other important decisions that were important in aligning mainstream evangelicals with the burgeoning religious coalition on the Republican Right, *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Green v. Connally* (1971). Those seeking to form the religious conservative political coalition portrayed both of these cases as an infringement by the secular state on the religious rights of conservative Christians. Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 63-64.

[174] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 62-64; Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 55-57. Schäfer notes that by easing the anti-Semitism, anti-Catholicism, and racism of traditional fundamentalism and maintaining an emphasis on inclusive moral issues over doctrinal purity, the conservative evangelicals seasoned the post-sixties religious realignment according to the split between theological orthodoxy and theological liberalism with their own special sauce. They combined working-class moral conservatism with consumer capitalism to construct a "narrative amalgam" of moral propriety, cultural fears, and material aspirations that enabled them to build their broad-based political coalition. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 146-147.

[175] During the 1960s, when civil rights was the defining national political issue, critics dismissed the political efforts of these southern conservative evangelicals as thinly veiled racism. However, as civil rights receded from national attention during the latter 1970s, the door was open for the Religious Right to emerge as a national movement with conspicuous southern leadership, such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, and James Robinson, who were able to marshal southern political conservative energies across a broader national coalition. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 237.

[176] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 62.

[177] Williams, *God's Own Party*, 6. Marsden refers to this 1970s iteration as a "fundamentalistic evangelicalism," which brings the separatist fundamentalist groups along with anyone else on the evangelical spectrum under the banner of politicized militants who were resisting moral cultural decline. Marsden considers this group to be synonymous with the "Religious Right," which became a political alliance that included people from mainstream evangelicalism and beyond, notably Roman Catholics and Mormons. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 234-235.

of the late twentieth-century evangelicalism with the politics of the Republican Right was one of the main reasons Keller decided to avoid explicitly referring to Redeemer Presbyterian Church as "evangelical." He did not want the more politically liberal population of young urban professionals turned off by the association of his evangelical brand with a political affiliation they repudiated. The success in redefining the evangelical brand to consolidate political power for the Republican Right of the southern fundamentalists of the late twentieth century became the challenge for Keller when he decided to start a ministry for young urban professionals in New York City that was faithful to traditional evangelical belief.

Part of the reason this redefinition worked to consolidate political power was because Graham, as well as the other white leaders within the NAE, retained the proprietary sense of responsibility for the national morality and spirituality of the United States, preaching that Americans had to be spiritually transformed if the nation was to survive.[178] In their attempts to create a subculture that offered them more of a mainstream platform within U.S. culture, the new evangelicals held two things in tension. They fully embraced mainstream, middle-class, white America while simultaneously working to keep the secularizing trends of mainstream culture at arm's length. This resulted in what Carpenter has termed a "strange dance," in which mainstream conservative evangelicals emulate many trends of popular culture while continuing to denounce America's transgressions.[179] Thus, the new evangelicals created a social dynamic in which the

---

[178] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 241.

[179] Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 242. Miller seems to agree with this point, indicating that many self-described evangelicals in the latter three decades of the twentieth century did not concede their cultural status as anything other than an oppressed and marginalized minority. Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 5.

alienation from mainstream culture over certain moral issues could bind the subculture, much as it had done for the previous generation of white fundamentalists. Meanwhile the people within the mainline conservative evangelical subculture could simultaneously occupy a position of increased cultural standing and influence. Ammerman takes this a step further, noting that despite their gains in cultural status and influence white evangelicals have persisted in portraying themselves as an embattled minority fighting a hegemonic culture.[180] Reframing their political aspirations in terms of the culture wars instead of explicitly racist positions allowed Falwell and others to exploit the sense of alienation among middle-of-the-road white evangelicals and pull Graham's crowd into a political coalition that would serve their own interests. Unfortunately, this allowed the complicity of the evangelicalism of the early twentieth century with white supremacist culture to persist into the post-Civil Rights era.

Although seeming to agree that evangelicalism's theological outlook, cultural resonance, and political alignments were defined by the dynamic tension between its integration into mainstream culture and its preservation of a militant, oppositional identity, Schäfer adds another layer of explanation as to why the mainstream white evangelical base joined the coalition of the Republican Right. The political efficacy of the Republican Right was predicated on evangelicalism's ability to integrate the 1960s drive for personal liberation, authenticity, and self-actualization into a "soft conversionism" that both affirmed the bourgeois individual and could exist within the traditional narrative of spiritual transformation. The evangelical emphasis on individualism, choice, voluntarism,

---

[180] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 62. Somewhat ironically, Ammerman has pointed out that evangelicals have actually drawn on feminist themes to depict themselves as this embattled and oppressed minority.

flexibility, and immediate individual access to spiritual knowledge reflected, more than

challenged, the surrounding social conditions of the late twentieth century in the United

States. The individualized focus within evangelicalism both reflected and supported the

norms and values that underlie consumer capitalism and ultimately augmented

evangelicalism's insertion into mainstream consumer culture.[181]

Schäfer points out how this individualistic approach of evangelicalism also had far-

reaching implications for how evangelicals perceived social problems. Conversion's central

tenet that the root of all ills emanates from the sinful heart and mind was applied not only

on an individual basis, but also as a root cause for the various social problems facing the

postwar United States, including race relations. By elevating choice, flexibility, individual

sovereignty, and free enterprise, Schäfer notes that evangelicalism translated career

success and upward social mobility into a religious drama that re-legitimized the core

myths of the American way of life.[182] The spiritualizing of career success within U.S.

consumer culture also implicitly endorsed the racially defined social privileges (i.e., white

privilege) that have been assigned within the racialized social order. The success of the

postwar generation in gaining cultural status and influence, even at a political level given

their connection to the Republican Right, ended up as less of a challenge to the racial

injustices implicit within mainstream U.S. culture and more of an expert rebranding that

consolidated the white evangelical position into a place of prominence and power. The

theology of work Keller preached to his young urban professional audience in New York

---

[181] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 6-8, 40.

[182] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives*, 22, 29. Schäfer even goes so far as to say that "the converted individual was thus ultimately the bourgeois individual," effectively eliminating the distinction between the evangelical believer and the average person trying to actualize the American Dream.

City during the late twentieth century followed this pattern established by mid-twentieth-century postwar evangelicalism.[183] Building on the theological innovations of the new evangelicals, Keller spiritualized the work of young urban professionals as a missionary endeavor, effectively transforming their career ambitions from the mundane to the sacred. In turn, Keller's theology of work also implicitly reflected the social privileges assigned to his white young urban professional audience by the prevailing racialized social order of the late twentieth century.

Hart-Celler Act Opens the Door for Major Impact

While white evangelicals consolidated their position of prominence and power within mainstream U.S. culture during the decades after World War II, a major shift occurred within U.S. immigration law that would have major implications for race relations within U.S. culture at large and within U.S. evangelicalism in particular. On October 3, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Hart-Celler Act into law. Although Johnson insisted that the law was not "revolutionary" and would not "reshape the structure of daily lives," the Hart-Cellar Act radically shifted immigration policies and priorities.[184] Until the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, U.S. immigration policy and priority had been established under the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. As noted in the first section of this chapter, the Johnson-Reed Act regulated immigration using a quota system based on national origin that favored people from northern and western Europe and barred immigrants from Asia almost entirely. The Johnson-Reed Act effectively established racial bias against people emigrating

---

[183] For a detailed description of Keller's theology of work, see chapter three.
[184] Jerry Kammer, "The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965: Political Figures and Historic Circumstances Produced Dramatic, Unitended Consequences," Center for Immigration Studies, September 30, 2015, https://cis.org/Report/HartCeller-Immigration-Act-1965.

from southern and eastern Europe and enshrined nativist objections to Asian immigrants.[185] For decades, critics had condemned this quota system as a "racist contradiction of fundamental U.S. values."[186]

The Hart-Celler Act of 1965 was viewed in part as a delayed, but welcome, response to these criticisms. It abolished the national origins quota system in favor of allowing for immigration on the basis of family reunification, employability, and refugee status.[187] The elimination of the quota system, and its underlying racial and nativists biases and priorities, allowed the Hart-Celler Act to be seen as a logical extension of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964.[188] Yet while the passage of the Hart-Celler Act was a satisfying symbolic gesture to millions who had been on the wrong end of the racial priorities written into the Johnson-Reed Act, the Hart-Celler Act has had unintended consequences. Hsu identifies one of these unintended consequences by pointing out that the Hart-Cellar Act did not really dislocate all racial priorities and stigmatization among immigrants to the United States. Instead, the Hart-Celler Act enabled a reworking of the racial priorities and stigmatization by privileging immigrants (usually from Asia) who have employment skills and education while simultaneously capping immigrants from Central and South America who tend to come to the U.S. through their family connections much more than employability. These priorities and preferences established by law are managed by geographic barriers, namely the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, that ensure national sovereignty over the immigration of Asian populations. This same national sovereignty is perceived as undermined by

---

[185] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 6.
[186] Kammer, "The Hart-Celler Act."
[187] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*, 10-11.
[188] Kammer, "The Hart-Celler Act."

immigrants from Mexico and Central America whose proximity on the same continental land mass allows the less educated and poorest to cross over the border. The encoding of economic priorities and the recording of racial stigmas into immigration laws have, according to Hsu, transformed Asians into model immigrants and assigned Latinx to the position of chief immigration threat. Hsu argues that since its passage the Hart-Celler Act has promoted a perception of Asian immigrants as sharing the "American values" of work ethic, education, and traditional family structure which puts them in a position to contribute to U.S. economic interests.[189] The priority assigned to Asian immigrants on the basis of their education and employability has had profound effects within late-twentieth century evangelicalism in the United States, particularly among the many evangelical parachurch ministries that developed during this period. These profound effects will be more fully described in the next section.

The mid-twentieth-century new evangelicals distanced themselves from the early twentieth-century fundamentalists by rolling out a rebranded evangelicalism. Through this rebranded evangelicalism, the new evangelicals were able to claim a credible and winsome image among mainstream conservative Protestants that eluded the previous generation of fundamentalists after the Scopes Trial. Yet for all the success of their rebranding efforts, the new evangelicals still repeated the pattern begun by the fundamentalists. The new evangelicals used different strategies, but ultimately sought to increase the cultural

---

[189] Hsu, *Good Immigrants*, 237. Hsu also indicates that the Hart-Celler Act promotes a corresponding negative perception of Latinx immigrants, who are stereotyped as incorrigible lawbreakers illicitly crossing the border with little or no education or employment opportunity who will inevitably become a drain on public resources. While it would be interesting and important to consider the effects of this stigmatization within immigration law on the development and integration of the Latinx populations within U.S. evangelicalism, that is not a focus of this dissertation. Instead, this dissertation is more focused on the effects of the Hart-Celler Act on the perceptions and opportunities of Asian immigrants, because Asian Americans comprise around one-third to one-half of the people who attended Redeemer's worship services.

103

influence for their rebranded evangelicalism as a means of saving the United States from breaking under the weight of moral degeneracy and social chaos just as the fundamentalists had. Furthermore, the new evangelicals crafted their rebranded evangelicalism to gather in a large following from the white, middle-class population of the United States. In so doing, the new evangelicals allowed their rebrand to reflect the racialized social order of the mid-twentieth century just as the fundamentalists associated their evangelical brand with the racialized social order of the early twentieth century. Both the fundamentalist and new evangelical phases of twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism were defined by their drive to increase their cultural influence and, in turn, allowed their particular evangelical brand to reflect the prevailing racialized social order. These two defining characteristics manifested themselves again in Keller's ministry to the young urban professionals in New York City during the late twentieth century. Repeating the pattern created by the interplay of these two defining characteristics within twentieth-century evangelicalism not only aligned Keller's ministry with that of the new evangelicals and the fundamentalists, it ultimately compromised Keller's evangelical brand from serving as an effective means of combatting the injustice promoted through the racialized social order of the late-twentieth century.

The Contesting Factions Era

As much as Graham, Ockenga, Fuller, and Henry worked to expand the power and prestige for their rebranded evangelicalism, they could not achieve complete control over the evangelical movement. By 1967, it was becoming impossible to regard evangelicalism in the United States as a single coalition with a more or less unified and recognized leadership. This resulted in part from an internal crisis within evangelicalism related to the

cultural changes brought on during the 1960s and the Vietnam War, both of which

challenged the 1940s and 1950s idea that evangelical social action should work toward

bringing about a Christianized version of Republicanism.[190] For instance, Sutton identifies

two major movements that occurred outside the evangelical mainstream during the latter

three decades of the twentieth century in the United States:[191] the "Jesus people" of the

1970s who blended the 1960s counterculture criticisms of mainstream American society

with a call to a radical, New Testament-type Christianity and a renewed surge of interest in

the apocalypse in the 1980s and 1990s led by such fundamentalist figures as Hal Lindsey[192]

and Tim LaHaye.[193] Miller comments that during the latter three decades of the twentieth

century, which he names the "Age of Evangelicalism," evangelical Christianity provided a

language, a medium, and a foil by which millions of Americans came to terms with political

and cultural changes. Evangelicalism brought influence on the mainstream culture through

the interplay of its left and right factions, even while the latter almost always maintained

the dominant position.[194]

Culturally Ascendant Evangelicalism Reflects Racialized Social Order

Since the 1970s, evangelicalism has evolved along multiple, sometimes overlapping

tracks.[195] The powerful, articulate, and culturally reputable white men who worked to give

---

[190] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 74.

[191] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 344.

[192] Two of Lindsey's most influential books during the latter decades of the twentieth century include *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and *The 1980s: Countdown to Armageddon* (1980).

[193] LaHaye is probably best known for his *Left Behind* book series (1995-2007), but also wrote the influential book *The Beginning of the End* (1972).

[194] Miller, *The Age of Evangelicalism,* 5-6.

[195] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 351. However, Miller makes clear that after Ronald Reagan claimed the presidency in 1980, evangelicalism became linked with political conservatism in the popular imagination for decades to come. George W. Bush cemented this perception two decades later with his "compassionate conservatism," in which he synthesized the therapeutic "Jesus talk" of evangelicalism with the political agenda of the Republican Right. Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 11-13.

evangelicalism mainstream credibility through Fuller Theological Seminary and

Christianity Today ran one; uninhibited, hard-core, premillennial populists who pulled

evangelicalism back toward its apocalyptic foundations ran another; and progressive-

minded evangelicals like those who had organized Evangelicals for Social Action ran a

third.[196] In fact, Schäfer argues that these progressive-minded evangelicals actually

challenged the dominance of the predominantly white, male, and politically conservative

leadership represented by the NAE by reawakening evangelical interest in social action in

line with progressive causes.[197] The contest to secure the "true" evangelical brand between

its progressive and conservative ends continued to shape the public perception of

evangelicalism even into the first decade of the twenty-first century. While the victory of

George W. Bush was heralded as the final victory of conservative evangelicalism in the

battle to secure the dominant position within the cultural mainstream,[198] founding leaders

of the progressive evangelical movement in the 1970s, like Jim Wallis, gained renewed

influence in the first decade of the twenty-first century. As Bush's popularity waned, Rick

Warren and a number of other prominent evangelicals cultivated a more moderate image

---

[196] Miller notes that during the 1970s, the evangelical left competed with the evangelical right to shape the meaning of "born-again politics." Progressives such as Ron Sider believed their approach to social engagement would eventually win out within the cultural mainstream, but the rise of the conservative right during the 1980s effectively blotted out the influence of the evangelical left within public perception. Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 8-10.

[197] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 11-12.

[198] Schäfer's observations make clear that Bush's victory and the establishment of conservative evangelicalism as the dominant voice within U.S. culture was the product of a decades long process of the "resurgent Right." They worked doggedly during the 1980s to marginalize the liberal views of the previous decade of progressive evangelicals by swaying the evangelical center back toward their limited views on social action and their unflinching faith in the virtues of the free market capitalism. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 11-12. Consistent with the original leadership of the NAE, leaders of the Christian Right movement proclaimed a message of religious piety, theological orthodoxy, moral traditionalism, and "redeemer nation" patriotism against the social action impulses, theological softening, and anti-capitalist spirit of the evangelical left. Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 145-146. For more discussion on this dynamic within the evangelicalism of the 1970s and 1980s, see Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1988), 181-214.

while emergent evangelicals outright criticized the cultural captivity imposed on evangelicalism through its alignment with social conservatism.[199]

While white evangelicals within all the contesting factions of the late-twentieth century started to work more with African Americans, for the most part black evangelicals[200] continued to labor through their own ministries and institutions. Black evangelicals comprised yet another faction within latter twentieth century U.S. evangelicalism as they had little incentive to partner with white evangelicals who had effectively privileged race over theology for the entirety of the twentieth century.[201] The privileging of race over theology has not only happened at the level of evangelical leadership, but also among individual evangelicals.

Ammerman notes that by the 1980s, evangelicals had become thoroughly middle class with education levels roughly parallel to mainline Protestants.[202] Until the 1980s, evangelicals had foxed their considerable organizational energy into the construction of a parallel cultural universe that was intended to insulate believers from the dangers of the secular world. The separateness of this evangelical subculture eroded during the last two decades of the twentieth century as evangelicals could be found in the elite universities

---

[199] Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 13-15. This dissertation is tracking the struggle to claim the public image of evangelicalism as expressed by a controlling faction, but it is important to note that the leaders who craft the dominant public perception of evangelicalism often do not give voice to the thoughts and feelings of the millions of ordinary evangelicals in the United States. See Smith, *Christian America?*, 191-195.

[200] This is the term used by Beulah to describe African Americans pastors and theologians who held theological views similar to Graham and Ockenga, but wanted to disassociate themselves from the new evangelical brand given its complicity with the prevailing racialized social order. The term "black evangelicals" also distinguished these African American pastors from such figures as Martin Luther King, Jr. and James Cone, with whom they shared the struggle to secure equal rights for all races, but not their progressive or liberationist approach to theology. See Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 12-19.

[201] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 351.

[202] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 57. In fact, Ammerman points out that during the 1980s and 1990s, evangelicals composed a middle-class consumer subgroup to whom retailers began to cater, as evidenced by sales into the billions at the Christian bookstores that began popping up all over the United States during this time frame.

(and supported by campus ministry organizations) that previous generations would have either eschewed or been unable to afford.[203] Yet for all their assimilation into the cultural mainstream as middle-class Americans, evangelicals during the 1990s still held onto the sense that they were a marginalized minority, reporting they felt excluded, marginalized, or discriminated against by secular institutions and elites.[204]

Furthermore, the association of evangelicalism with the prevailing racialized social order did not seem to be displaced with its cultural ascendency in late-twentieth-century U.S. society. While most prominent white evangelical leaders of this era openly denounced racism, they implicitly affirmed the social privileges created and preserved for whites within the prevailing racialized social order. As the means of creating and preserving these social privileges for whites became subtle in the post-Civil Rights Act era, these white evangelical leaders were generally not even aware that they were affirming the white privilege established by the late twentieth-century racialized social order. This subtle and implicit affirmation of white privilege within late-twentieth century evangelicalism also made its way into Keller's preaching to the young urban professionals of New York City. The content analysis of Keller's sermons in chapters three and four exposes the mechanisms by which this subtle and implicit affirmation of white privilege within late-twentieth-century evangelicalism infiltrated his evangelical brand.

---

[203] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 57. Balmer goes further to indicate that evangelicals actually capitulated to the consumeristic culture as sermons that critiqued the rampant materialism in American society, prevalent in the 1950s and 1960s, became non-existent in the 1980s as evangelicals became more comfortable with their niche in the suburbs and settled into middle-class comfort. Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 58.

[204] Smith, *Christian America?*, 4. Toward the latter twentieth century, evangelicals had moved outside of their own subculture, working themselves into positions in mainstream institutions like academia, the government, the media, and business. Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 1-20.

One example of the late-twentieth-century evangelical affirmation of white privilege can be seen in whom Lindsay chose to interview for *Faith in the Halls*. Lindsay based his views in *Faith in the Halls* on his findings gathered from 360 interviews with evangelicals during the early 2000s. He was primarily interested in exploring whom he considered to be the most important evangelical leaders in the United States and examining what drives them. Lindsay interviewed two types of evangelical leaders: those who lead institutions overtly within the evangelical subculture and public leaders within the government, business, or other secular or mainstream cultural institutions.[205] Lindsay recognized that he ended up interviewing a relatively homogenous crowd that consisted of almost exclusively white evangelicals.[206] In reviewing *Faith in the Halls*, Alan Wolfe notes that "[a]lthough evangelicalism dominates African-American religion and is growing among Latinos, [Lindsay] talked, for reasons never explained, overwhelmingly to whites."[207]

In other words, by the late twentieth century, evangelicals had begun to secure positions of cultural status and influence that would appear to fulfill the vision of the post-war leaders of the NAE. However, Lindsay's choice to interview white evangelical leaders, while passing over leaders of color who hold similar theological views, suggests that the evangelicals who have fulfilled that NAE's vision to secure that cultural status and influence are white. Thus, the push to regain cultural status and influence within evangelicalism

---

[205] Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 8.

[206] The homogeneity extended beyond race. Almost all of Lindsay's interviewees were male, married, and had between two or three children. Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 8.

[207] Alan Wolfe, "Sunday Book Review: Evangelicals Everywhere," *New York Times*, November 25, 2017, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/books/review/Wolfe-t.html. Although Lindsay did indicate that a distinction should be made between "white evangelicalism" and "black evangelicalism" (see Lindsay, *Faith in the Halls*, 8), his decision to interview almost exclusively white evangelicals combined with his intent to interview only the most important leaders within U.S. evangelicalism privileges the white expression of evangelicalism and therefore supports Wolfe's assessment.

continued to reflect, if not directly rely on, the white privilege that persists within the post-Civil Rights Act society in the United States. Consistent with Lindsay, Keller also chose sources for his sermons written by white people for primarily white audiences. Part of the apologetic engagement Keller used to make his evangelical brand sound credible to young urban professionals relied on presenting himself as a meticulous expert. To portray himself as this meticulous expert, Keller laded his sermons with numerous references to scholars in all different fields. The common denominator between most of these scholars was their race. Keller used quotes from scholars who were almost always white, thereby privileging the voices and thought of whites as the most trustworthy and profound. As the later content analysis describes more fully, Keller's choices of whom to quote in his sermons, just as Lindsay's choices of whom to interview, contributed to the reflection of white privilege within late-twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States.

Lindsay's, and Keller's, choices were not the only evidence of the subtle reflection of white privilege within evangelicalism during the latter twentieth century. Indeed, white evangelicals of the latter part of the twentieth century themselves revealed the internalization of the racial priorities of the prevailing racialized social order as more subtly expressed and established in the post-Civil Rights Act era. In *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (2000), Emerson and Smith focus deliberately on white evangelicals. While they recognize that people of all ethnic backgrounds self-identify as "evangelical," over 90 percent of people in the United States who call themselves "evangelical" are white.[208] Their research[209] demonstrated that white

---

[208] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 3.
[209] During the 1990s, Emerson and Smith conducted a national telephone survey of more than 2,500 using random sampling methods, which established their baseline. They traveled to 23 states to interview nearly

evangelicals saw three main types of problems related to race: (1) prejudiced individuals and the bad relationships they create; (2) other groups—usually African Americans—trying to make the racial conflict a group issue when there is nothing more than individual problems; or (3) a fabrication of the self-interested—again often African-Americans, but also the media, the government, or liberals.[210]

Emerson and Smith found that the resistance of white evangelicals to systemic or group-oriented explanations for race problems within society resulted from their adherence to three bedrock, faith-based assumptions that undergird their understanding of reality: accountable freewill individualization, relationalism, and anti-structuralism.[211] Accountable freewill individualization places the individual at the center, able to operate independently of all structures and institutions and, consequently, individually accountable for their actions.[212] For evangelicals, relationalism derives from the view that human nature is fallen and that salvation results only from a "personal relationship with Christ," and in the absence of healthy relationships, people will not make the right choices. White evangelicals then tend to see social problems as rooted in poor relationships.[213] Most white evangelicals also reject systemic structural analysis of the racial injustice. For most white evangelicals, their anti-structuralism issues from their conviction that sin is inherently

---

300 (mostly white) evangelicals to supplement their quantitative data with "a mass of rich, qualitative, contextualized, nationally representative data." They also drew from the General Social Survey, which is an annually conducted national sample of Americans that contains answers to several questions related to race. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 18-19.

[210] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 74-75.

[211] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 76. They rely on the sociological theory of transposition, developed by William Sewell, to explain how these faith-based assumptions which developed within their explicitly religious context (the evangelical subculture) are projected out and mapped onto the general social context in the United States. See William H. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98.1 (1992), 1-29.

[212] This close connection between faith and freewill individualism tended to make white evangelicals even more individualistic than other white Americans. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 76-77.

[213] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 77-78.

limited to individuals. Since the racial conflict is the result of sin, white evangelicals

consider it to be largely an individually based problem and reject any explanation or

solution that relies on a broader systemic or structuralist rationale.[214] Schäfer ups the

stakes a bit by concluding that the application of individualized spiritual solutions to social

problems inhibits white evangelicals from any authentic challenge of the underlying

consumeristic or racialized social order. Instead, this individualized focus causes white

evangelicals to understand moral regeneration as the economic success of competitive,

entrepreneurial individuals within the status quo and moral indignation in terms of the

more limited sins they perceived to be evidence of the post-sixties moral decline in the

United States.[215] This individualized focus to spirituality and social problems undergirded

much of Keller's approach to race in his preaching. In fact, the individualized focus in

Keller's preaching was one of the primary factors causing his evangelical brand to reflect

the racialized social order of the late twentieth century.

Ammerman cautions against simply understanding the resurgence of conservative

evangelicalism during the latter three decades of the twentieth century as a movement

whose "political aims are racism by another name" or that it was spurred solely by

channeling lingering racism among white southerners.[216] She suggests instead that the

evangelical political movement gained momentum as it "learned to tell a new story about

---

[214] Wholly absent from the interviews Emerson and Smith conducted is the recognition that poor relationships could be shaped by social structures. White evangelicals simply did not see any relevance to a structural explanation and instead labeled this approach to social problems as completely wrongheaded. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 78.

[215] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 145-146.

[216] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 61. She notes that the racial undertones that accompanied Republican gains during the 1980s were as appealing to non-southern (and non-evangelical) whites as they were to southerners.

what is wrong with American culture and what they must do about it."[217] To tell that story, Ammerman observes that evangelicalism had to develop a more multicultural sensibility during the latter twentieth century that allowed African American, Latinx, and Asian voices to be heard among those of white evangelicals. Even in the South, evangelicalism had become increasingly integrated by the 1990s.[218] Emerson and Smith have also recognized that mainstream evangelical leaders have been overtly active in the area of race relations, calling for a complete end to racial strife and division during the latter decades of the twentieth century.[219] Even so, Emerson and Smith also make the significant observation that this increased engagement occurred in conjunction with a subtle shift in the perception of how to address racial reconciliation.

Individualization of Racial Reconciliation

During the 1950s and 1960s, John Perkins, Tom Skinner, and Samuel Hines became key figures pushing the new evangelical movement to embrace racial reconciliation as part of their renewed impetus for social engagement. They all were African American, had experienced the harshness of racism in the United States, described themselves as "black evangelicals,"[220] and were willing to work with white evangelicals. They viewed racial reconciliation as "God's one-item agenda" and developed four major steps to achieve the racial reconciliation that they believed would put an end to racial injustice within U.S. society.[221] First, individuals of different races must develop primary relationships with

---

[217] Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 61.
[218] Although Ammerman recognizes that, in spite of this increase, the racially integrated congregation remains the exception, not the rule. Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 60-61.
[219] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 4. They cite Billy Graham, the Promise Keepers movement, and the "Memphis Miracle" as examples of this evangelical leadership calling for racial reconciliation.
[220] See Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 12-19.
[221] See Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 54-55.

each other. Second, social structures of inequality must be recognized and resisted by all

Christians together. Third, whites, as the creators and benefactors of the white supremacist

society, must repent of their personal, historical, and social sins. Fourth, African Americans

must be willing to forgive whites individually and corporately, repenting of any anger and

hatred they hold toward whites and the system. Building on the criticisms of previous

generations of African American pastors and theologians otherwise sympathetic to

evangelical theology, black evangelicals argued that U.S. evangelicalism had corrupted the

reconciling power of the gospel for the sake of church growth. They refused to limit racial

equality to strictly individual and spiritual terms, instead advocating for temporally and

socially based solutions intended to spread justice through social structures of

inequality.[222]

For the most part white evangelicals never fully embraced the focus of black

evangelicals on larger social structures, institutions, and culture that privileged whites over

other races.[223] The form of racial reconciliation embraced by white evangelicals of the

latter third of the twentieth century, and popularized by *Christianity Today*, shifted away

from the focus on the racial privileges within social structures, institutions, and culture to

emphasize individual-level components of racism. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, a

racial reconciliation movement exploded among evangelicals through the efforts of a host

of new white evangelical leaders. Although the approach of these new white evangelical

leaders was shaped in part by the black evangelicals of the 1950s and 1960s, the message

[222] They used Billy Graham as an example of this approach among white evangelicals as Graham separated racial issues from evangelism during his Crusades. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 54-55, 58.
[223] Emerson and Smith note that some white evangelicals, such as Jim Wallis, Ronald Sider, Ronald Behm, and Tony Campolo, did embrace the racialized understanding of society promoted by the black evangelicals. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 59.

given to the popular audience during the latter two decades of the twentieth century was individualized. This message did not include the system-changing components of the original formula that required a challenge of social systems of racial inequality and the confession of social sin, and instead affirmed the more individualized approach to race that white evangelicals of that time period generally favored.[224] This individualized approach effectively marginalized any ability to see racism within the social structures and amounts to a de facto endorsement of the status quo with respect to the social structures, and their underlying privileging of whites over other races, within U.S. culture. Again, reflecting the broader trends within late-twentieth century evangelicalism, Keller's sermons featured this same individualized approach and thereby obscured the presence of the racialized social order embedded within the social structures of New York City from his young urban professional audience. Instead of functioning as a means of exposing white privilege, Keller's preaching followed the white evangelicalism of the late twentieth century by offering a tacit, unintentional endorsement of the racial status quo to the young urban professionals gathered at Redeemer Presbyterian Church.

Asian American Influence

The explosive growth of Asian Americans within evangelicalism during the latter decades of the twentieth century has added another layer to the discussion of evangelicalism's affirmation of white privilege in the post-Civil Rights era. Rebecca Kim notes that second generation Chinese and Koreans have quickly become "poster-children" within U.S. evangelicalism. They have "made it" in the top educational institutions in the

---

[224] In fact, Emerson and Smith argue that the removal of the social and systemic aspects seemed to be what allowed racial reconciliation to become popularized among white evangelicals in the latter twentieth century. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 59, 67-68.

United States, even to the point that they are perceived or characterized as an "overrepresented" population within these prestigious universities.[225] Many of these Asian Americans are also unabashedly evangelical and have joined distinctly evangelical college ministries, altering the racial composition of those ministries significantly. By the late 1990s, 80 percent of the members at more than fifty evangelical Christian groups at UC Berkley and UCLA were Asian American. In fact, many traditionally white campus ministries became Asian American campus ministries during the latter two decades of the twentieth century. At Yale, Campus Crusade for Christ was 100 percent white in the 1980s, but by the end of the twentieth century had become almost 90 percent Asian American. InterVarsity Christian Fellowship reported that from approximately 1985 to 2000 its 650 chapters at universities across the United States experienced a 267 percent growth rate among Asian Americans (from 992 to 3,640).[226]

This dynamic has prompted major campus evangelical organizations to form separate Asian American ministries to compete with independent Korean American and pan-ethnic Asian American campus ministries that have sprouted and flourished during this same time period. The majority of these Asian American evangelicals are Korean Americans and Chinese Americans who came from mostly middle-class families, grew up in white or racially mixed suburbs, and are familiar with mainstream U.S. culture and organizations. They tend to affirm the same theological principles as white mainstream

---

[225] Rebecca Kim, "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals: Ethnic, Multiethinc, or White Campus Ministries?" *Sociology of Religion* 65.1 (2004), 19, 22. Kim notes that while Asian Americans accounted for approximately 4 percent of the U.S. population in 2004, they made up more than 15 percent of the student enrollment at the Ivy League colleges, more than 20 percent at Stanford, Caltech, and MIT, and over 40 percent at the top public universities in California, including Berkeley and UCLA. Kim, "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals," 20.
[226] Kim, "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals," 20-21.

evangelicals, and yet still often feel marginalized by white evangelical campus ministries. One of Kim's interviewees noted that Korean American students tend to choose an alternative to the established white evangelical campus ministries, because "whites welcome Asians, but not into leadership positions and they don't realize that by being status quo, they discriminate and make it hard for Asians to move up…they are used to having leadership…so if Asians start their own separate organizations, they are more able to take on leadership positions." As Asian American students have gained access to major universities in great numbers, have proven to be socio-economically mobile, and seem to be reviving and leading campus evangelical organizations, they reflect the winsome attributes that the original leaders of the NAE had hoped would increase among evangelicals in the latter decades of the twentieth century. However, these Asian American students have been stymied from claiming leadership positions and often marginalized as racially distinct within the campus ministry programs dominated by white leadership.[227]

Soong-Chan Rah echoes this sense of marginalization when he recounts his own journey of becoming, as he describes it, "a product of American evangelicalism."[228] Born in Seoul, South Korea, Rah came to the United States when he was six-years-old. His father abandoned their family and left his mother to work twenty hours a day, six days a week. He credits an evangelical Christian community as providing the support that "served as a lifesaver" for his family during those years.[229] Through his evangelical faith, he was transformed from a sense of "bitterness and defeat to an unwavering hope."[230] His

---

[227] Kim, "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals," 21, 30.
[228] Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books 2001), 14.
[229] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 15.
[230] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 15.

elementary, secondary, and higher education all happened in the United States. He was one of the many second generation Korean students to join the campus ministry of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship and ultimately received a graduate theological education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has planted and pastored several evangelical churches and been deeply immersed in evangelical networks, organizations, and denominations. He has also served as a professor at an evangelical seminary. He feels that evangelical Christianity defines both his identity and status in the United States. Yet for all this he is "confronted with the reality of feeling marginalized in the context of [his] own faith tradition."[231] As immersed as he is within U.S. evangelicalism, he notices that he is still oftentimes seen as an outsider. He chalks this up to evangelicalism in the United States being held captive to the standard of Western, white expressions of the Christian faith. He further suggests that mainstream evangelicalism in the United States ignores, or actively suppresses, alternative expressions of the Christian faith generated by racial minority communities.[232] Echoing the sentiments of the group leader interviewed by Kim, Rah's experience reveals the underlying affirmation of white supremacy that remains subtle, but active within the expressions of U.S. evangelicalism in the post-Civil Rights era. While racism was held to be a sin within evangelicalism during these latter decades of the twentieth century, the privileging of whites over other races became even more clear when recognizing that Asian American evangelicals, who exhibited values and attributes similar to their white, middle- and upper-class counterparts, ended up marginalized as outsiders. Given the high percentage of Asian Americans present at the worship services of Redeemer

---

[231] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 16.
[232] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 16.

Presbyterian Church, the racial dynamics experienced by Asian Americans within late-twentieth century evangelicalism factor into the racial analysis of Keller's sermons featured in chapter four.

Summary of Race-Sensitive Socio-Historical Analysis

This race-sensitive historical and sociological analysis has traced a repeating pattern in which two major characteristics shape the different iterations of twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States. The first characteristic concerns the unquenchable evangelical drive to increase their cultural influence upon U.S. society. In each of the fundamentalist, new evangelical, and contested faction eras of the twentieth century, different evangelical groups competed to establish their evangelical brand as "true" evangelicalism. By claiming the "true" expression of evangelicalism, each group hoped to gather in as many as possible under their brand and, in turn, increase the cultural influence of their evangelical brand upon the mainstream population in the United States. Although no one group ascended as the one "true" form of evangelicalism, the new evangelicals of the mid-twentieth century, led by Billy Graham, Carl F.H. Henry, and Harold Ockenga, enjoyed astonishing success in gathering people under their evangelical brand. They also made enormous strides within the mainstream population as their evangelical brand baptized free markets, consumerism, and middle-class, suburban lifestyles while decrying such commonly disreputable foes as communism and the moral and social decay brought about by the contravention of traditional family values. By the late twentieth century, a group of southern fundamentalists were able to exploit the mainstream evangelical brand to align evangelicals as a solid Republican voting bloc, giving birth to the political juggernaut of the Christian Right by the late 1980s.

These advancements came at a high cost for the evangelical brands that wielded this increased cultural influence during the twentieth century. The second characteristic that defined twentieth-century evangelicalism involves its reflection of the prevailing racialized social order in the United States. This reflection of the racialized social order was the consequence, in part, of the drive to amass the greatest possible cultural influence within U.S. society. During the Jim Crow era, evangelicals reflected, and even advocated for, overt white supremacy as dictated through segregationist laws and customs. In the post-Civil Rights decades of the twentieth century, evangelicalism switched from an overt to a subtle affirmation of the racialized social order. After the segregationist social order was prohibited by law, evangelicals ended up affirming the systemic privileging of whites over other races within the post-Civil Rights Act society. This affirmation was so subtle, evangelicals within the post-Civil Rights Act society were generally not even aware they were making this affirmation. The subtlety of this affirmation of the post-Civil Rights Act racialized social order was effected through the conflation of race relations with an individualized form of evangelical faith that prevented white evangelicals from recognizing the social structures that preserve white privilege were in themselves sinful. These capitulations to the racialized social order caused evangelicalism to reflect the views of mainstream white, middle-class American suburbanites and gather them in hoards under their evangelical banner. This affirmation of the racialized social order ultimately associated evangelicalism with a white supremacist culture. Not only did this alienate other racial groups, such as African Americans and Asian Americans, this association with white supremacist culture compromised the ability of evangelicalism to challenge racial injustice within the United States.

In the twentieth century, the pattern by which the two defining characteristics shaped the major evangelical movements was repeated in each successive historical era. Each time, white evangelical leaders compromised their evangelical brand through complicity with the prevailing racialized social order in exchange for the increased cultural influence to be gained with their intended target audience, middle- to upper-class, white Americans. These two defining characteristics are present within Keller's ministry in New York City. The content analysis of Keller's sermons reveals that the pattern of being shaped by these two defining characteristics played out in much the same way in Keller's preaching as it had in these other white expressions of twentieth-century evangelicalism. In spite of his explicit opposition to racial injustice, Keller unintentionally and unknowingly allowed his evangelical brand to be compromised as a means of combatting systemic racial injustice in New York City. The inattention to critical race theory and the mechanisms of color-blind racism described by Bonilla-Silva caused Keller, like other late-twentieth-century white evangelical leaders, to unwittingly make his evangelical brand complicit with the racialized social order that privileged whites over all other races. Before launching into the content analysis of Keller's sermons, the historical and sociological context for his ministry must be better defined. To accomplish this, the next chapter tracks the different historical iterations of the repeating pattern in which the two defining characteristics of twentieth-century evangelicalism shape major evangelical ministries within the context of one of the most powerful centers of cultural influence in the United States: New York City.

CHAPTER TWO:

TWO DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS IN NEW YORK CITY

New York City was a key setting in which the twentieth-century pattern of evangelical ministries being defined by the insatiable drive for increased cultural influence and the reflection of the racialized social order was repeated within successive historical contexts. To twentieth-century evangelicals, New York City occupied a paradoxical position of great promise and equally great peril. As the "City That Never Sleeps" and the "Capital of Capitalism,"[1] New York City symbolized, if not outright commanded, a higher order of influence upon the culture of the United States than virtually any other city. The great promise of maximal cultural influence made evangelical leaders covet New York City as a highly strategic venue from which to launch their ministries. At the same time, evangelicals considered New York City to be a place of spiritual and moral malaise, a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah. Evangelicals throughout the twentieth century saw most cities in the United States in these negative terms, but, as the city of cities in the United States, New York became an exaggerated symbol of perdition that could spread through the whole of the United States if left unchecked. This great peril also drew evangelicals who wanted to save New York City from itself and, in so doing, save the soul of the entire United States.

This chapter explores three significant, white, male, evangelical leaders who were drawn to New York City by its great promise and great peril during the early and mid-twentieth century: John Roach Straton (1875-1929), Harry Emerson Fosdick (1878-1969), and William Franklin "Billy" Graham, Jr. (1918-2018). Placing them within their historical

---

[1] John Tierney, "What's New York the Capital of Now?", *New York Magazine* (November 20, 1994), 53.

and social context, this chapter shows how each of them vied for their brand of evangelicalism to ascend to a position of dominance, and therefore achieve its greatest potential for cultural influence within New York City. Their drive to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand within New York City caused each to make his ministry reflect the racialized social order operative during their historical context. Straton, Fosdick, and Graham all led evangelical ministries that were shaped by these two defining characteristics and therefore became different iterations of this repeating historical pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism.

The ministries of these three evangelical figures served as historical patterns that foreshadowed the evangelical ministry of Timothy Keller (1950-) during the late-1980s and 1990s. Drawn by New York City's great promise and great peril as much as Straton, Fosdick, and Graham had been, Keller played his own role in this larger evangelical drama within the particular setting of the Big Apple at the end of the twentieth century. As young urban professionals, most of whom were white, were moving into New York City "to make it" in their careers, Keller believed they were the key to achieving the greatest cultural influence for his evangelical brand. He deliberately tailored his preaching to connect with these young urban professionals. In so doing, Keller's ministry assumes its place as the final iteration of a repeating pattern within twentieth-century New York City in which complicity with the prevailing racialized social order resulted from the drive to achieve the greatest possible cultural influence for his evangelical brand.

Great Promise and Great Peril

New York City occupied a unique position among the early coastal settlements that would become the United States of America. John Tierney of *New York Magazine* identified that uniqueness as follows: "New York, unlike Puritan Boston or Quaker Philadelphia, was not founded by religious visionaries…. It was financed by private subscribers with a profane motive…. Commerce took precedence over conformity; profits had priority over vague and disputable moral principles. Money was the ultimate measure."[2] Since the Dutch settled on the Island of Manhattan in the early 1600s, commercial interests governed the socio-political order of New York City through the history of its development. New York City then grew into the financial center of the nation during the post-Revolutionary War period. As the Industrial Revolution took hold in the major cities of the United States during the early 1800s, the need to sell the glut of manufactured goods increased the scale of domestic and foreign trade to the point that ancillary financial institutions, such as banks, insurance companies, auction houses, and a permanent stock exchange, were needed to facilitate this commerce. By 1840, Wall Street had become the center of New York City's financial district and allowed New York's mercantile leaders to "provide the credit and loans on which American domestic trade and economic development came increasingly to depend."[3] New York City's success as a financial and commercial capital within the United States became a magnet that pulled people from within and outside of the United States.

---

[2] Tierney, "What's New York the Capital of Now?", 53. This does not mean there was no presence of religious authority in this early settlement. It simply means that the "profane motive" to establish a commercial settlement was generally supported by the Dutch Reformed merchant class.
[3] Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press 1995), 37.

Another cultural wrinkle that contributed to the uniqueness of New York City was that from its beginning as a Dutch colony and trading center, New York City had been home to a variety of ethnic and racial groups who exhibited little inclination to exclusivity. Father Isaac Jogues, a Jesuit missionary among Native Americans, reported in 1643 that while the settlers had been ordered not to admit anyone who did not practice the Dutch Calvinist religion, "this is not observed, for besides Calvinists there are in the colony Catholics, English Puritans, Lutherans, Anabaptists, here called Mnistes [Mennonites], etc."[4] While the Dutch Reformed clergy of New Amsterdam did not favor this religious diversity, the Dutch merchants who had settled there were receptive to diversity of all kinds, because they knew their commercial prosperity depended on attracting colonists who might not be from the Netherlands. For all the growth and changes within New York City since its inception as a Dutch colony, Binder and Reimers note that "the characteristic that had always been it most distinctive remained constant—the ethnic, racial and religious heterogeneity of its population."[5] Carnes supports this position by pointing out that the history of religion in New York City has been framed by a higher degree of tolerance, secularization of public institutions, and pluralism than elsewhere in the United States.[6]

The ongoing priority of commercialism over religiosity and the diversity of religions and ethnicities embedded within the culture of New York City made it a place of great promise and great peril for evangelicals. As the dominant commercial and cultural center of the United States, New York City promised to be a venue through which evangelicals were

---

[4] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 5.
[5] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 31. Although Binder and Reimers recognize that ethnic diversity in the United States is not unique to New York City, what is unique is that until the latter decade of the twentieth century most immigrants entered the United States through New York's port and many of them established their original residence in the U.S. there. Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, x.
[6] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

able to exert enormous influence on the U.S. society as a whole. However, as one of the most religiously and ethnically diverse cities in the United States, New York City also posed great peril. Evangelicals had to compete for the attention of New Yorkers as one of many different options for faith and belonging. Instead of being repelled, this challenge drew major evangelical figures to New York City. The challenge of this great peril coupled with its great promise made New York City an irresistible prize for evangelicals looking to maximize their cultural influence.

Nineteenth-Century Common Evangelical Culture

Even before New York City's siren call had summoned such twentieth-century evangelical figures as Straton, Fosdick, Graham, and Keller, nineteenth-century evangelicals had already realized the significance of tapping into the cultural power of New York City. Nineteenth century New York City exhibited a high degree of religious diversity, although primarily in the form of various Protestant Christian denominations and churches.[7] Yet among these different religions and ethnic communities, evangelicalism had a strong presence. Nineteenth-century evangelicalism in New York City was not the contested category it would become during the twentieth century. Although recognizing that each church and denomination developed its own distinctives, Kyle Roberts describes nineteenth-century evangelicalism in New York City as a "common culture" across hundreds of Protestant churches and tens of thousands Protestant parishioners.[8] During this time period, New York City became a, if not *the*, center for evangelicalism in the United

---

[7] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 48; Anna Karpathakis, "Conclusion: New York City's Religions: Issues of Race, Class, Gender, and Immigration," in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, eds. Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 388. Carnes notes that the number of Protestant denominations increased as different immigrant groups, namely the Dutch, English, and Germans, brought their own versions of Protestantism into New York City. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 13.
[8] Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham*, 4.

States. Matthew Bowman refers to nineteenth century New York City as the "capital of evangelical consensus" and the "beating heart of evangelicalism" in the United States. [9] Kyle Roberts indicates that "evangelical Gotham" commanded a presence that extended its influence across the nation and around the world.[10]

By the end of the nineteenth century, evangelicals had developed a triumphal narrative about their cultural status and influence in and through New York City. The triumphal narrative held that evangelicals had delivered New York City from a "babel of competing colonial Christianities" and transformed the city "into the nineteenth-century hub of the American evangelical empire, the seat of the nation's great pulpits, the seedbed of American revivalism, the home of such institutions as the Mission an Tract Society and the American Bible Society."[11] Throughout the nineteenth century people of Northern European descent came to New York City to drive the vast expansion of Protestant churches that would be collected under the collective evangelical banner. Some of these people were already established in the United States as an influx of New Englanders from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts flooded into New York City to take advantage of the commercial opportunities the city in the post-Civil War period.[12] Many more emigrated directly from countries in Northern Europe during the period historians have referred to as New York City's "Old Immigration era."[13] Although by 1860, Irish

[9] Matthew Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 15, 22.
[10] Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham*, 4.
[11] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 22.
[12] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 37-38.
[13] The "Old Immigration" era refers to the period between 1815 and 1880 when most of the immigrants came from northern and Western Europe, including the Irish, Germans, English, Scots, Welsh, French, Swiss, Scandinavians, Dutch, and Belgians. Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 38. However, many of these foreign immigrants did not settle in New York City for long. Edward K. Spann indicates it was only the

Roman Catholics and German Jews[14] ascended as the largest immigrant groups in New

York City, the next largest immigrant contingent emigrated from England, Scotland, and

Wales. These immigrants from the British Isles shared both the English language and the

Protestant religion of most of the native born residents of New York City and, as a result,

were able to move up the social ladder more quickly than the destitute and uneducated

Irish and Germans.[15] This dynamic both created a "common evangelical culture" among

Anglo-Saxon Protestants and ensured that Anglo-Saxon Protestant faith among the upper

socio-economic classes in New York City during the nineteenth century shared this

common evangelical culture.[16] It was this common evangelical culture that led to the

evangelical consensus that existed as a broad coalition among several Protestant churches

and denominations within nineteenth century New York City.

As this common evangelical culture exercised increasing influence within

nineteenth-century New York City, the beginnings of the first defining characteristic within

twentieth-century evangelicalism emerged. The historical antecedent for the second

defining characteristic of twentieth-century evangelicalism can also be traced back to the

previous century. Indeed, the historical roots of the complicity of twentieth-century

evangelicalism with the racialized social order of New York City reached back to this

common evangelical culture of the nineteenth century. Race had become a vital factor

---

"ablest and most ambitious on the one hand and the poorest and most unwanted on the other." Edward K. Spann, *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857* (New York: Columbia University Press 1981), 24.

[14] Although the German immigration of this era included a large Jewish population, as many of the German Jews fled the intolerance of their native country and sought out better economic opportunities in New York City. As Jewish immigrants settled in New York City, their communities tended to be divided along lines of national origin. A divide also ensued between the Jewish people who identified as Orthodox and those who preferred the Reform platform. Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 81.

[15] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 48.

[16] Roberts actually refers to nineteenth century evangelicalism as a "common culture" that Protestant churches drew from. See Roberts, *Evangelical Gotham*, 4. See also Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 34.

within the social fabric of New York City. Although slavery was abolished in New York in 1830, emancipation did not bring equality for African American New Yorkers, as white New Yorkers made clear their belief that African Americans should not have equal civil rights. The same type of race baiting that existed in the rest of the nation's newspapers was present in New York City to mobilize the white vote against equal civil rights for blacks.[17] Antebellum New York's shipping, banking, and manufacturing economy was strongly tied to the slave-driven economy of the South, and the sentiment in the city prior to the outbreak of the Civil War was one of compromise. Even in postbellum New York, an equal ballot for black males was voted down three times before the U.S. federal government ratified the 15th Amendment in 1870 to grant African Americans the right to vote at the federal level. In 1873, when the state legislature enacted a civil rights law prohibiting discrimination because of race or color on public conveyances, in theaters, inns, and other public amusements, it was not rigorously enforced.[18] This virulent nineteenth century racism limited African American New Yorkers to low paying and menial employment opportunities that afforded them no opportunity to rise up the economic and social ladder.[19] The influx of the new waves of immigrants after 1830 made things even tougher

---

[17] Phyllis Field quotes one newspaper of that era as follows: "The negroes of Five Points long for the day when they will be privileged to take to their arms the palefaced beauties of the Caucasian race in the city of New York. Already the waiters and whitewashes and bootblacks have grown impudent in anticipation of the bright prospect for them." Phyllis Field, *The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1982), 117. In fact, Binder and Reimers point out that voters in New York City proved to be even more opposed to black suffrage than elsewhere in the state. The voters in New York City were particularly opposed to equal rights for African Americans, in part because of the hostility directed at them by their chief competitors on the bottom of the economic and social ladder, the Irish and the German immigrants. Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 53.
[18] Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 53, 58, 72.
[19] Binder and Reimers point out that some have equated the plight of African American New Yorkers during this era with that of the incoming Irish. Both occupied miserable living conditions, crushing poverty, and faced strident prejudice. However, Binder and Reimers note that while the Irish encountered the most difficulties and prejudice from native New Yorkers among the immigrant populations of that era, "no white

for black New Yorkers, as they competed with immigrants for the same low skill, menial jobs.[20]

The Anglo-Saxon Protestants who shared in the common evangelical culture of nineteenth century New York City were not immune from this racial discrimination. Just as in restaurants, transportation businesses, and most other social institutions of nineteenth century New York City, African Americans were segregated from white people and forced to sit in the rear at worship services. Just as they began to form their own business and commercial networks with the city, African Americans abandoned these white Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches and formed their own congregations. By the end of the nineteenth century, African Americans had formed independent churches among the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian, and Methodist traditions.[21] These independent African American churches existed alongside the growing numbers of Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches and denominations that shared in the common evangelical culture of nineteenth century New York City. Although many of their theological views reflected those of the common evangelical culture, these nineteenth century Anglo-Saxon Protestant churches simply did not recognize a common evangelical culture with these independent African American churches.

---

group, not even the Irish, suffered so much for so long as did the blacks." Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 58.

[20] Blacks and immigrants believed that each stood in the way of each other's opportunity to move up the social ladder, leading to social tensions that sometimes erupted in violence against blacks during the years leading up to and during the Civil War. For instance, in 1863, a predominantly Irish mob victimized blacks during the New York City draft riots. See Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 55.

[21] While these independent churches self-identified with these various denominations, the white clergy who controlled these denominations resisted granting them association, effectively relegating them to outsider status without any formal denominational authority. For instance, the black St. Philip's Protestant Episcopal Church petitioned in 1846 to be received into the Episcopal Diocese of New York and was rejected. Only after repeated applications for entry did the white Episcopalians finally grant them entry into the diocese in 1853. However, General Theological Seminary persisted in its refusal to accept black applicants. See Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 56.

As another feature of their triumphal narrative, Anglo-Saxon Protestants within the common evangelical culture of nineteenth century New York City tended to be animated by the idea that New York City was destined to become a kind of cultural monolith organized around their common evangelical values. While the idea of implementing a socio-cultural order based on white evangelical values was popularized throughout the United States by such revivalist figures as Finney and Moody, it had particular resonance among the evangelical populations of New York City.[22] Throughout the nineteenth century, the common evangelical culture of these Anglo-Saxon Protestants had been successful in imposing their own sense of order on New York City as the flood of congregations, and their insurgent leaders, organized under their evangelical banner had disrupted the magisterial Anglican and Dutch Reformed denominations. It seemed to believers within this common evangelical culture during the late nineteenth century that they would be able to overcome any challenge in remaking the social order of New York City in their own image: that of the white, evangelical Protestant middle-class.[23]

In spite of their triumphal narrative, achieving a cultural homogeneity based on the common evangelical culture of the white, Protestant, middle-class would become a drastically uphill climb by the end of the nineteenth century. Butler notes that the population of New York City grew from approximately seven hundred thousand in 1850 to nearly 6 million by 1920. These population trends pushed New York City's array of congregations, denominations, religious buildings, personnel, and modes of outreach to

---

[22] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 60.

[23] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit,* 7, 60. In fact, in New York City, liberal evangelicals like Charles Parkhurst allied with politicians, social scientists, and middle-class moralists to turn back what was considered to be a rising tide of immorality within the city. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 7.

explode in number, size, depth, and variety.[24] The massive immigration of first-generation

Irish and Italian Catholics and eastern European Jews during the latter decades of the

nineteenth century seemed to be a never-ending tide that rattled evangelical New

Yorkers.[25] Butler flatly names the immigration of these populations as a direct challenge to

the political and cultural dominance in New York City to which evangelicals had aspired.[26]

Another threat to establishing social homogeneity on the basis of a common

evangelical culture surfaced when a new form of consumer capitalism had begun to take

hold in New York City during the 1880s and 1890s. New York City was transforming itself

into a playground for commercial entertainment: phonograph, kinetoscope, and movie

houses opened while department stores, hotels, and the subway brought New Yorkers

together physically as well as culturally. This process saw the city's symbolic center move

from City Hall to Times Square with the rise of a mass culture centered on the city's

commercial economy, far-reaching print media, and new and technologically sophisticated

entertainment industry.[27] To evangelicals, the consumer culture promoted by this new

commercialism promoted values that were primarily economic instead of religious or

ethnic. Evangelicals then viewed this consumer culture as a competing vision for the soul of

---

[24] Jon Butler, "God, Gotham, and Modernity," *The Journal of American History* 103.1 (2016), 24.

[25] Until 1825, New York City had only one synagogue. From 1825 to 1860, twenty-six synagogues popped up to accommodate the incoming waves of Jewish people from various European countries. Although most came from Germany during this period, Jewish people who emigrated from England, Bohemia, the Netherlands, France, Russia, and Poland also populated these newly erected synagogues. See Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 81. Catholic churches proliferated in New York City to accommodate these waves of Irish and Italian Catholics. As the Irish wave of immigration to New York City began earlier, Irish New Yorkers positioned themselves to dominate the priesthood and magisterium of the Roman Catholic Church in New York City. As a demonstration of their growing presence within New York City, the Roman Catholic Church authorized the building of a cathedral that would capture the attention of all New Yorkers, particularly its Protestant elite. St. Patrick's became that cathedral as construction finished in 1878. Binder and Reimers, *All Nations Under Heaven*, 101.

[26] Butler, "God, Gotham, and Modernity," 24.

[27] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 155-156. This "new economy" laid the foundation for New York City to become the center of national culture by the mid-twentieth century.

New York City, especially as the assimilative power of this consumer commercialism gained

more steam among the burgeoning middle-class. For instance, Protestant ministers within

the common evangelical culture reviled the nightlife of New York City throughout the

nineteenth century and had swayed the new middle-class Protestants away from its

enticements. Yet by the end of the nineteenth century, the recriminations of these

evangelical pastors fell short as the New York City nightlife gained in popularity, and even

respectability, among white, middle-class Protestants.[28] The city was transforming into a

mass of distinct and "mutually uncomprehending" groups that thwarted the evangelical

dream of a society unified through a mutually held common evangelical culture.[29]

Faced suddenly with a culture that had become increasingly hostile to the dream for

a society unified by their shared evangelical values, the nineteenth century common

evangelical culture splintered as different factions scrambled for new tools to implement,

to redefine, and to make evangelical theology persuasive in New York City.[30] This

splintering produced two major evangelical factions in New York City during the early

twentieth century. Incorporating insights from the modernists of the early twentieth

century, liberal evangelicalism[31] in New York City came to fruition in the figure of Harry

Emerson Fosdick. New Yorkers who preferred the early twentieth century fundamentalist

---

[28] Oscar Hammerstein of New York's Olympia Theatre was a leading theater advocate who determined (correctly) that eliminating profanity, sexual innuendo, and other tawdry aspects of the performances would open the box office to vast new audiences and create a boom time for the New York stage. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 157.

[29] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 42-44.

[30] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 52. Although it is interesting to note that Butler identifies a unifying factor among these evangelical factions, as well as with the Catholics and Jews of that period. Butler observes that all of these groups attempted to adapt the institutions, professionalization, and technologies of the modern commercial culture as a means to confront the crisis of urban faith after 1880. Butler, "God, Gotham, and Modernity," 32.

[31] This term is taken from Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 10.

approach to evangelicalism found their champion in John Roach Straton. Even as evangelicalism in New York City broke into these two different camps, both of these warring factions exhibited the two defining characteristics of evangelicalism during the twentieth century. Each sought to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand among their chosen constituents, namely the white middle-class, and in so doing, made their evangelical brand complicit with the racialized social of early twentieth-century New York City.

Evangelical Brands of Fosdick and Straton

Harry Emerson Fosdick and John Roach Straton loomed large as central figures in the conflict within evangelicalism in New York City during the early twentieth century. The dividing lines between them reflected the broader divisions over the modernist-fundamentalist controversies that raged elsewhere within U.S. evangelicalism during this time period. On top of to these controversies, disagreements about how to contend with the consumer capitalism and ethnic diversity of early twentieth century New York City served as a major point of contention between Fosdick and Straton. While both Fosdick and Straton each claimed to be the heirs to the "true" evangelical heritage, these two key figures exemplified both the divisions and commonalities among early twentieth century evangelicals in New York City. In fact, Carnes highlights the religious and moral conflict between the fundamentalist tradition of Straton and the liberal evangelical movement of Fosdick as one of the major instances when the religious tolerance that has generally characterized New York City broke down.[32]

---

[32] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

Fosdick's Liberal Evangelical Brand

Harry Emerson Fosdick was born in Buffalo and did his undergraduate studies at Colgate University. After graduating with a bachelor's degree in 1900, Fosdick headed to New York City to pursue theological studies at Union Theological Seminary.[33] In 1911, seven years after his graduation, Fosdick joined the faculty at Union Theological Seminary and accepted a call to become the pastor at First Presbyterian Church in the West Village in 1918.[34] Over the next decade Fosdick's popularity as a preacher and stature as an unflinching advocate for liberal evangelicalism grew.[35] Fosdick naturally found a theological home for himself with a liberal approach to evangelicalism, because he felt uncomfortable with the pessimistic aspects of fundamentalism. He could abide neither the traditional view that people are fully corrupted by sin nor the premillennialist insistence that an apocalypse was imminent as the result of the moral decay within places like New York City. Within his liberal form of evangelicalism, Fosdick could adopt a theological outlook that made space for more progressive views of both humanity in general and New York City in particular.

---

[33] "Harry Emerson Fosdick," *Britannica Academic*, accessed September 9, 2018, https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Harry-Emerson-Fosdick/34994.

[34] Fosdick was ordained in 1903 at Madison Avenue Baptist Church on 31st Street in Manhattan and served as the pastor at First Baptist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, from 1904-1917. "Harry Emerson Fosdick," *Britannica Academic*.

[35] This dissertation uses Bowman's term "liberal evangelicalism" to describe Fosdick's approach as it is a more precise depiction. Most likely, within the historical setting, Fosdick would have been more commonly known as a champion of liberal Protestantism. See Daniel Ross Chandler, "Harry Emerson Fosdick: Spokesman for the Modernist Movement," *Religious Communication Today* 5 (1982), 2. Bowman actually differentiates Fosdick from liberal Protestantism on the ground that liberal Protestantism seemed willing to let go not only of traditional doctrines related to the divine inspiration of Scripture and the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but also of the religious trappings related to worship and liturgy. Thus, liberal Protestantism devolved from a religious tradition into a social movement that resembled a generalized modernist cultural progressivism. Because of Fosdick's insistence on using the word "evangelical" to describe his ministry and his refusal to allow his theological views, and the congregation at Riverside Community Church, to lose focus on experientially connecting with the divine, Bowman points out the Fosdick is better described as a "liberal evangelical." See Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 7-14.

By the turn of the twentieth century the lingering dream among evangelicals of unifying New York City through a common evangelical culture that superseded the differences among the various religious and immigrant groups was out of step with the city's new generation of progressive thinkers. This new generation had come to see the city's diversity as a strength and celebrated its cosmopolitan vigor. Several prominent luminaries within New York City's burgeoning intellectual and bohemian culture, represented by such writers as Herbert Croly and Randolph Bourne, linked the city's prosperity to its embrace of cosmopolitan and pluralist virtues, such as democratic inclusivity, egalitarianism, tolerance, and cooperation. These progressives viewed the combination of pluralism and commercial success in New York City as the embodiment of the best that United States had to offer the world. In fact, they believed that the roots of New York's cosmopolitan success lay in its cultural history of embracing virtues of pluralism and religious tolerance that were directly counter to those that nineteenth century evangelicals had imagined for the city.[36] This new generation of progressivists believed that New York City could become the first U.S. metropolis that could serve as the "avatar of a nation tolerant and culturally diverse."[37] As these ideas seeped into the cultural mainstream within New York City, Fosdick did not entirely let go of the dream to bring an evangelical order to New York City. Instead, he refashioned what this evangelical order would look like. His liberal approach to evangelicalism did not require a specific doctrinal allegiance or distrust of the changes brought about by the consumer capitalism in New

---

[36] Joel M. Winkelman, "Herbert Croly on Work and Democracy," *Polity* 44.1 (2012), 103-104; Christopher McKnight Nichols, "Rethinking Randolph Bourne's Transnational America: How World War I Created an Isolationist Antiwar Pluralism," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8.2 (2009), 219.
[37] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 7.

York City. Fosdick's evangelicalism made space for believers to both hold onto faith in Jesus while embracing the cultural changes brought on by the pluralism and consumer capitalism of the early twentieth century in New York City. Fosdick hoped this shift would allow evangelicalism to be more appealing among this new generation of progressives and increase the cultural influence of evangelicalism among these white middle- to upper-class New Yorkers.[38]

Within Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism, one could lay claim to being an evangelical and yet still believe that the Virgin Birth was a myth, that Jesus was not literally resurrected, and that the original manuscripts that became the Bible were not inerrant.[39] Fosdick rejected the certainty of doctrine held by the fundamentalists of this era, because he feared this certainty would perpetuate an intolerance for the pluralistic views held by differing groups of New Yorkers. Fosdick believed that this intolerance would ultimately alienate the new generation of New York City's middle-class progressives who had been enveloped in diversity, intellectualism, and consumer culture. Much like Fosdick rejected the cultural intolerance of the early twentieth-century fundamentalists, Keller took great pains to prevent his evangelical brand from being perceived of as intolerant by the young urban professionals of the late twentieth century. While much of Keller's evangelical brand diverged from Fosdick's, he shared Fosdick's desire to prevent his evangelical brand from

---

[38] Carnes seems to lump Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism in with "the Protestant establishment in New York City" during the 1920s that was striving to institutionalize a liberal Protestant ethic in an internationalized, universalized, rationalized religion and image of the city. Although Bowman argues that Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism appears too nuanced and distinct to be simply collapsed into a generally liberal Protestant establishment, Carnes is helpful in pointing out that Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism does seem to be in alignment with this liberal Protestant establishment to the extent that they both understood modern rationality as a component of promoting religious and cultural harmony in New York City. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.
[39] See Harry Emerson Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?", *Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922), 721-22.

alienating his target population. To attract the young urban professionals of the late-twentieth century, Keller embraced the diversity, intellectualism, and commercial culture of New York City just as Fosdick had done to appeal to the middle-class progressives of the early twentieth century.

Fosdick's preaching was neither expository nor topical. He eschewed both of those approaches as handcuffing him too closely to a strict and formulaic usage of the Bible. Instead, Fosdick employed a "project method" in which he structured a sermon around a particular issue that his congregation seemed to be wrestling with. Fosdick's preaching was not designed to convict people of their sins, but to convince them of their possibilities. Fosdick's antagonists accused him of substituting counterfeit religion, saccharin sentimentalism, and social science for the Word of God. In 1923, the Presbyterians among these antagonists brought charges against First Presbyterian Church in response to Fosdick's preaching. The Presbytery ultimately acquitted First Church, largely because of Fosdick's significant standing within evangelical circles. First Church's acquittal, coupled with the increasing popularity of Fosdick and his theological approach among evangelicals in New York City, provoked a crisis within evangelicalism from the perspective of Fosdick's antagonists.[40]

Fosdick's main antagonists were the fundamentalists, and John Roach Straton, the self-proclaimed champion of fundamentalism in New York City, eagerly took up the mantle of Fosdick's archrival. The antagonism between liberal evangelicals and fundamentalists in

---

[40] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 259-262; Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 170-176. Provoked by Fosdick's growing popularity, in 1923 J. Gresham Machen released *Christianity and Liberalism*, a publication that assailed Fosdick and his contemporary liberal Protestants as practitioners of a "modern, non-redemptive religion."

New York City resulted from their differing theological vision for and approach to the city. Their evangelical brands were locked in a competition with each other to claim the loyalty of the white, middle-class Protestants and thereby amass greater influence within the mainstream culture of New York City. Matthew Bowman contends that liberal evangelicalism and fundamentalism were two divergent methods of laying claim to a common evangelical heritage, both of which consider evangelicalism more of a style of being religious in terms of behavioral expectations and methods of practice than a coherent theological proposition. He characterizes fundamentalism as a mindless and sullen defense of the past wholly at odds with the changes brought on by the pluralistic and consumer culture of New York City, and liberal evangelicalism as a simultaneously confident and desperate attempt to rediscover pathways to evangelical spiritual power that could co-exist among cultural developments within New York City during the early twentieth century. For Bowman, these liberal and fundamentalist evangelicalisms were the product of pastoral experimentation directed toward preserving the evangelical faith—and with it, a certain cultural mode for human society—within the crucible of tenements, department stores, and skyscrapers that crowded out traditional Manhattan neighborhoods during the early twentieth century. The liberal evangelicals and fundamentalists of the early twentieth century employed radically divergent methods to mobilize the same theological language and achieve the same goal of expanding the cultural influence for their evangelical brand within this changing cultural landscape of New York City.[41] Based on his assessment of Fosdick's "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" as a "modernist jeremiad" that countered the verbal tirades of the fundamentalists, Carnes might contest that their methods were

---

[41] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 10- 14.

"radically" divergent. Nevertheless, Carnes also recognizes the controversy between the liberal evangelicals and the fundamentalists as a competition to promote their evangelical brand as the "true" evangelical faith for the white, middle-class Protestants of New York City.[42]

Straton's Fundamentalist Evangelical Brand

The divergent methods of the fundamentalists were prominent within Straton's ministry. Shortly after arriving in New York City in 1918, Straton became the "face of New York fundamentalism."[43] Born in 1875, Straton was the son of a Baptist preacher who raised him in the churches of rural and agrarian Indiana, Georgia, and Alabama. While living in Atlanta in his twenties, Straton grew to believe that the pleasures and possibilities of the modern city posed significant danger to evangelical faith and piety. While listening to the preaching of James Boardman Hawthorne at Atlanta's Baptist Tabernacle, Straton had a conversion experience and realized that although city life promoted sin, a dynamic preacher within that context could still promote salvation. In contrast to Fosdick's more progressive, northeastern theological education at Colgate and Union Theological Seminary, Straton's studies at the Baptist Theological Seminary of Louisville, Kentucky immersed him in a conservative theological perspective. He espoused this perspective as a professor at Baylor in Texas, a citadel of Baptist higher education, and then subsequently as a pastor at in Chicago, Baltimore, and Norfolk before arriving in New York City at Calvary Baptist Church.[44]

---

[42] See Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

[43] J. Terry Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?: Fundamentalism and the Modern City in Reverend Straton's Jazz Age Crusade," in *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture*, eds. John M. Giggie and Diane Winston (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 74.

[44] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75-76.

Upon his arrival in New York City, Straton identified a "jazz spirit" as characterizing modern urban life.[45] Straton equated this "jazz spirit" with an apotheosis of the soulless and the sensuous that inevitably supplants Christian ideals in favor of an idolatrous glorification of brute power and passion for pleasure. He promptly launched a bare-knuckle campaign against Broadway, promising the people of New York that he would "put up a man-sized fight" against the theater's "forces of sin and godlessness."[46] For fundamentalists like Straton, Broadway served as symbol of how far culture had slid toward Gomorrah in that the theater generated its profits by appealing to the base instincts of humanity, such as worldliness and lust. Another problem Straton identified within New York City was the tolerance of liberal evangelicals for integrating higher criticism within their biblical hermeneutics. Straton decried this theological liberalism and their "rationalistic and skeptical tendencies in religious thought" as an enemy of evangelical faith and an assault on the Christian culture of New York City itself.[47] Straton also spoke out against the American Museum of Natural History on the Upper West Side when it opened an exhibit called the "Age of Man" based on an evolutionary theory of human history. Straton claimed this was a "misspending" of a "tax-payer's money" and was "poisoning the minds of New York school children by false and bestial theories of evolution."[48] In direct contrast to Fosdick who embraced the progressivism, pluralism, and consumer culture of early twentieth century New York City, Straton thought that the city needed to be either "Americanized" or "Christianized" before New York City slumped toward being "Europeanized" and became

---

[45] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75.
[46] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 114.
[47] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 92.
[48] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 166.

an infection that would "paganize" not only the people living within the city, but also in the rest of the United States.[49] It is evident that Straton perceived the strategic importance of gaining cultural influence and credibility within New York City. To gain credibility for his fundamentalist brand of evangelicalism in New York City would provide Straton with a powerful platform from which he believed he would be able to influence the culture of the United States as a whole.

Todd and other historians point out that, somewhat ironically, Straton used many of the modern innovations of the consumer and entertainment culture he railed against to augment his attempts to "Americanize" and "Christianize" New York City.[50] For example, Straton used a motor car fitted with a portable pulpit that allowed him to speak directly to people in the streets, a radio program that allowed him to speak directly to people in their homes, and a skyscraper church on 57th Street in Manhattan that housed not only the Calvary Baptist Church congregation but also an income-producing hotel.[51] With the stakes so high—indeed Straton perceived the heart and soul of New York City, and by extension that of the entire United States, to be hanging in the balance—Straton was willing to use any means necessary to combat the "jazz spirit" that he believed was taking over the city.[52]

---

[49] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75.

[50] Straton was not unique in this respect. Fundamentalists in other parts of the United States availed themselves of the new technology of the 1920s, using film and particularly radio to broadcast their message of imminent apocalypse. In fact, the fundamentalists showed much more aptitude in integrating mass media into their ministries than their liberal counterparts. See Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75; Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 122-123; Carpenter, *Revive Us Again*, 11.

[51] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75. At the time of writing this dissertation, Calvary Baptist Church is still at that same location on 57th Street in Manhattan.

[52] Straton was not the only New York City clergy to make use of the new communication technology of the early twentieth century. Butler notes that these new technologies, particularly radio programs, were used by "ministers, priests, and rabbis" during this time period in New York City "almost as quickly as stations drew listeners." Butler, "God, Gotham, and Modernity," 29.

As a popular, spotlight-loving preacher who vied for the heart and soul of the city through a confrontational style of preaching that espoused a gloomy apocalyptic pessimism and distaste for the pluralism and consumer culture of New York City, Straton inevitably became the avatar of what was wrong with the fundamentalist evangelical brand for Fosdick and the more liberal evangelicals of New York City.[53] Fosdick assailed Straton and the growing movement of fundamentalists in May of 1922 in his now famous sermon "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"[54] Fosdick loathed Straton's confrontational and divisive methods, believing that the "controversial intolerance" of fundamentalism with its strident certainty and commitment to unprovable authority would "shut the door of the Christian fellowship" with the spiritual seekers of New York City.[55] For their part, Straton and other fundamentalists railed back against Fosdick not only for his departure from their traditional evangelical views, but also for his verbal agility with language and hazy commitment to clarity that allowed him, in their estimation, to wrap heresies in pious, and therefore disarming, rhetoric.

After the credibility of fundamentalists with the general public was shattered at the Scopes Trial in 1925, Straton sought to reassert the standing of the fundamentalist perspective within the mainstream culture of New York City by challenging Fosdick to a debate. Fosdick rejected the challenge on the ground that putting their divisiveness on display would be counterproductive to increasing the cultural influence of evangelicalism

---

[53] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 115.
[54] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 256; Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8. Sutton points out that the "fundamentalists" Fosdick condemned were the spiritual progeny of the radical evangelicals who had worked for almost a half century to breathe new life into apocalyptic millennialism. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 79.
[55] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 257-58.

within New York City.[56] Nevertheless, Fosdick resigned from First Presbyterian Church in 1925 partly in response to this pressure from Straton and the other New York fundamentalists.[57] Yet while under fire from these fundamentalists, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a patron for Baptists in New York City, convinced Fosdick to accept a call to become the pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church immediately upon leaving First Presbyterian Church. Rockefeller already had plans to move the Park Avenue Baptist congregation to a new church building in the Morningside Heights area and wanted Fosdick as a leading voice for the liberal brand of evangelicalism to lead the community who would gather for worship there.[58] This new church building opened in 1930 and was called Riverside Church. Under Fosdick's leadership, Riverside Church became a renowned bastion of liberal theology and social activism within New York City.[59] As the practical and formal distillation of a liberal evangelical theology that held the tension between the metaphysical force of evangelical devotion and placing conversion and salvation within the broader context of social action,[60] Riverside Church became the laboratory for Fosdick to work out one of the central struggles of his career: holding onto this evangelical dream of a unified, Christian New York City while also accommodating its cultural pluralism.[61]

---

[56]Although when attacked by Straton, other liberal evangelicals did take the conflict public. For instance, William Merrill, pastor of the Brick Church Presbyterian, was similarly accused by Straton and responded with a public warning that Straton was an "extremist" in an article published by *The Presbyterian*. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 264.

[57] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 268; Chandler, "Harry Emerson Fosdick," 3.

[58] Chandler, "Harry Emerson Fosdick," 3.

[59] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 268. It is not only scholars and historians like Matthew Bowman who have come to see Riverside Church this way. As a testament to Riverside Church's reputation within the mainstream culture of New York City through the twentieth century and beyond, Paul Vitello refers to Riverside Church this way in a cityroom blog for the *New York Times* in 2009. See Paul Vitello, "Riverside Church Pastor Resigns After 9 Months," *New York Times*, City Room: Blogging from the Five Burroughs, June 30, 2009, https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/30/riverside-church-pastor-resigns-after-2-months/.

[60] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 271.

[61] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 275.

Straton's vision for bringing about a unified, Christian New York City was not one of integrating, but overcoming the cultural pluralism of the city. The collapse of the cultural standing of fundamentalism after 1925 did not deter Straton's vision to convert New York City, and ultimately the United States, into a unified cultural homogeneity organized explicitly around Anglo-Saxon Protestant values.[62] Straton abhorred the pluralistic culture of New York City, believing that the plethora of Irish, Italian, Jewish, and African-American people living in New York City held a love of pleasure that fueled the decadent and immoral consumer and entertainment economy of the city. As a polar opposite to the progressives who saw this cultural pluralism as a distinctive strength of New York City, Straton made explicit his views that salvation for New York City could only be achieved through the reinstilling of a decidedly Anglo-Saxon discipline with its values of "Americanism" and "old-time religion."[63] For Straton, anyone other than the Anglo-Saxon people living in New York City could only be cured of their "amusement madness" that was threatening the very foundations of civilization by adopting Anglo-Saxon discipline and values.[64] Without hyperbole, Straton contended that faithful servants like himself needed to bring about the redemption of New York City through the adoption of these Anglo-Saxon values for the good of the entire United States. New York's riotous economy of pleasure aimed a "pagan

---

[62] While Straton was unwilling to concede defeat, Ammerman does suggest that after the loss of their cultural influence after the Scopes Trial, religious piety was uncoupled from social activism within the fundamentalistic brand of evangelicalism. Fundamentalist churches forwent their efforts to influence the cultural mainstream and largely separated themselves from the broader U.S. culture that had rejected them. Ammerman, "American Evangelicals," 53-55. Matthew Sutton, on the other hand, would debate this point, arguing that Straton exemplified the continual desire for fundamentalists to exert their influence on mainstream culture in the United States before and after the Scopes Trial. Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 63-66.
[63] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 85.
[64] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 85.

arrow" at the very heart of the Christian nation Straton both believed the United States was supposed to be and still could become.[65]

To further promote this unified, Christian vision organized around Anglo-Saxon values within New York City, and by extension the United States as a whole, Straton bitterly opposed the candidacy of New York's Democratic governor Alfred E. Smith for the presidency in 1928. Along with other Protestant nativists in New York City and around the country, Straton feared that electing Smith, a Catholic who opposed Prohibition and had connections with the corrupt political organization of Tammany Hall, would effectively impose a death sentence on the Protestant Republic. Straton left his pulpit in New York City to tour the country in the campaign against Smith. He wanted to speak to the American public as a voice from New York City that advocated for a very different American society than the one he believed Smith was promoting. While Straton went on his tour to campaign for the heart and soul of the United States, Fosdick was consolidating his position as one of the key authoritative voices on evangelicalism within New York City in the wake of the public collapse of fundamentalism. Straton's indefatigable efforts on this campaign pushed him past his own limits, leading to his abrupt death in 1929.[66] Straton's untimely passing left Fosdick without an equal fundamentalist challenger for his liberal evangelical brand in New York City.

Racialized Social Order In Common

Their desire to control the evangelical brand and assert cultural influence within New York City was not the only thing that Fosdick and Straton had in common. Much like

---

[65] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 85.
[66] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 84.

the previous generation of nineteenth-century evangelicals in New York City, both

Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism and Straton's fundamentalism was intended to cater to the

white, middle-class Protestant population in New York City, ultimately rendering their

brands of evangelicalism complicit with the prevailing white supremacist culture. Straton

injected an overt and unabashed white supremacism into his fundamentalist

evangelicalism. Although insisting that he did not intend to fan racial prejudice, Straton

commented that it was significant that several of New York's theater operators were Jews

who held views "utterly alien to all Christian ideals."[67] Sutton points out that whatever

Straton's intentions, the "closing flourish" for his arguments against the New York City

theater lapsed into the anti-Semitic stereotype that these theater companies were owned

by a godless cabal of Jews who were using the stage to undermine Christian values.[68]

Straton also denounced the theater's depiction, and implicit condoning, of interracial sex.

The diluting of the white race, for Straton, meant the demise of the "benevolent superiority

of white Protestants" whom Straton considered less susceptible to the sensuality,

licentiousness, and love for pleasure than other races who were "less developed."[69] In fact,

Straton believed that the freedom given to African American communities only served to

foster a tendency toward crime and immorality.[70] Straton repeatedly used negative

stereotypes of African American men as rapists and murders who lusted after the bodies of

white women and saw the "blending of two races by marriage" as a "monstrous thing" in

---

[67] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 232.
[68] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 113.
[69] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 233.
[70] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 235.

that it broke down the "barriers between the two races which were erected by God

Almighty for the protection of both."[71]

These prejudicial views of African Americans were so in line with those of the Klu

Klux Klan, they earned Straton the praise of the Exalted Cyclops of a branch of the Klan in

Jamaica, Queens. The Exalted Cyclops wrote to Straton that "it is indeed gratifying to know

a man of your high caliber and standing in the religious world is so nobly championing the

cause of American Protestantism" and invited Straton to a secret gathering to address

twenty-five hundred Klansman.[72] While Straton remained publicly unaffiliated with the

Klan, he seemed partial to their efforts by indicating that "we have long needed in this

country a truly adequate Fundamentalist organization that will have teeth."[73] In his

campaign against Smith, Straton resorted to race-baiting when speaking to southern

crowds, throwing out the charge that white Democrats in New York like Smith were

working with African Americans and that some of these Democrats had actually

intermarried with African Americans. Straton's vision for New York City, and the United

States, to become subject to an evangelical order organized around Anglo-Saxon values was

fueled by his overtly held views of white supremacy. Linking the redemption of New York

City, and subsequently the United States, to the cultural adoption of these Anglo-Saxon

values makes it impossible to disentangle Straton's fundamentalist brand of evangelicalism

from an explicit white supremacy that reflected the views of many of the white, middle-

class Protestants he hoped to gather under his banner.

---

[71] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 135.
[72] Charles E. Thompson to John Roach Straton, August 16, 1928, quoted in Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 200.
[73] John Roach Straton to J. Frank Norris, April 4, 1928, quoted in Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 197.

While Straton's fundamentalistic evangelicalism contained explicitly white supremacist views, Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism reflected the surrounding racialized social order more subtly. Fosdick did not take an explicit position against cultural values that were not Anglo-Saxon or evangelical. His embrace of the progressivist affirmation of the pluralism of New York City seemed to preclude any explicit endorsement of white supremacy. Yet despite his apparent beneficence for a pluralism of views of how to best live in the urban environment of New York City, Fosdick's charity toward pluralistic views had tighter limits when dealing with religious communities of color. In 1936, the messianic African American religious leader Father Divine appeared at Riverside Church with an entourage.[74] They had come to attend the scheduled meeting of a committee of relief workers that was being held at Riverside. After the relief worker meeting concluded, Father Divine's followers began to sing hymns. A group of Riverside's regular parishioners gathered around, and Father Divine began preaching to them. When Fosdick learned of the impromptu worship gathering, he ordered Father Divine and his group to disperse and leave immediately. Without offering Father Divine opportunity for rebuttal, Fosdick deemed him a showman and a publicity seeker who sought to use the platform of Riverside for his own aggrandizement.[75]

---

[74] Three years earlier, Father Divine had moved his religious community from a large home on Long Island to a new headquarters in Harlem. Father Divine had proven himself to be a charismatic pastor as his ministry attracted hundreds of followers. To and for this crowd of followers, Father Divine preached a message of racial integration, aided people looking for work, and opened several cheap restaurants and clothing stores throughout Harlem. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 278; J. Gordon Melton, "Father Divine: American Religious Leader," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed on January 27, 2019, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Father-Divine. See also Judith Weisenfeld's analysis of Father Divine's Peace Movement in *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (New York: NYU Press 2016).
[75] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 278.

Part of Fosdick's objection to Father Divine was his evangelical discomfort with Pentecostalism. Bowman notes that as a Pentecostal, "Father Divine's beliefs and practices lay outside the acceptable norms for evangelicals of most stripes in New York City."[76] Even Fosdick's expansive, liberal approach to evangelicalism did not allow room for Pentecostals within the community at Riverside Church. The congregation at Riverside who had gathered under the banner of Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism was predominantly white, middle- and upper-class professionals, even though Riverside was surrounded by the African American communities of Harlem. Fosdick defended the fact that Riverside did not draw members from these African American communities on the ground of religious preference. He surmised that African Americans generally found Father Divine's style of worship more appealing and was not interested in reaching out to any population interested in that approach to worship.[77] The combination of Fosdick's disapproval of Pentecostalists as unsuitable members of his congregation with the reality that most of these Pentecostals were African American suggests a subtle, hidden racial and cultural bias at work in Fosdick's lack of interest in reaching out to the people of Harlem. Fosdick preferred his liberal evangelicalism to remain undiluted by expressions of the Christian faith that were less palatable to the sensibilities of the white, middle- to upper-class people who gathered to worship at Riverside Church.

This is not to say that Fosdick was against African Americans attending the worship at Riverside. Much to the chagrin of his white congregants, Fosdick employed African

---

[76] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 278.
[77] Carnes indicates that large numbers of African American pastors in virtually any era of twentieth-century New York City embraced and practiced a charismatic/Pentecostal approach to their ministries. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 10.

Americans to sing in the choir and even invited Mordecai Johnson, the African American

president of Howard University, to preach at the Sunday worship at Riverside

occasionally.[78] Fosdick was also involved in anti-discrimination efforts in New York City

and insisted that neither he nor anyone in leadership at Riverside had "drawn the color

line."[79] Yet for African Americans to be members at Riverside, Fosdick required them to set

aside whatever preferences they might have had for worship and adopt the liberal

evangelicalism that his mostly white congregation found appealing. Without seeming to

recognize it, the way in which Fosdick guarded the community at Riverside Church reveals

a subtle complicity with the white supremacist norms within New York City during the

early twentieth century. Gregory Gilmore-Clough has commented that Fosdick exhibited a

"stunning lack of awareness" of his own racial biases that resulted from a "reflexive

rejection" of cultural expressions, such as jazz music, that did not align with his own "race-

and class-coded" preferences.[80] By insisting on an approach that catered to his race- and

class-coded sensibilities of what worship should be, Fosdick attracted white professionals

who shared his race- and class-coded sensibilities and essentially made the worship at

Riverside Church a de facto "whites only" space that resembled other segregated

establishments, such as restaurants and transportation, in New York City. Fosdick wanted

to seek harmony with the pluralist society of New York City through his liberal

evangelicalism, but he wanted that harmony to be on his own terms.[81] This meant that

Fosdick's career-long dream of bringing an evangelical unity to New York City was tainted

---

[78] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 279.
[79] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 278.
[80] Gregory Kipp Gilmore-Clough, "The Social Is Personal: Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Riverside Church, and the Social Gospel in the Great Depression" (PhD diss., Temple University, 2014), 65.
[81] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 279.

with the same complicity with the prevailing racialized social order present within the broader culture of New York City and U.S. evangelicalism.

For all their differences in approach toward the pluralistic and consumer culture in New York City, Fosdick and Straton shared a common complicity with the racialized social order that was embedded within their desire to increase the cultural influence of their evangelical brand within the city. The race-coded preferences within Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism were subtler than the open white supremacy Straton injected into his fundamentalism. Even so, both evangelical camps reflected the early twentieth-century New York City iterations of a pattern repeated in all epochs of twentieth-century U.S. evangelicalism in which the desire for increased cultural influence results in a complicity with the racialized social order. Whether affirming or opposing the pluralism and consumer culture of New York City during the early twentieth century, white evangelicals of any type did not integrate the views of people of color within their vision for an evangelical New York City. Evangelicals, such as Fosdick and Straton, in New York City at the end of the first couple decades were interested in guarding and promoting their evangelical brand among the white, middle-class population and, in so doing, allowed their evangelical brand to be tainted by the prevailing racialized social order. Later, Keller would follow the example of Fosdick and Straton as these two defining characteristics also surfaced in his ministry to young urban professionals in New York City during the late twentieth century. Following the historical trajectory begun in the evangelical ministries of Fosdick and Straton, Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church would become a final iteration of the twentieth-century pattern in which the drive to achieve the greatest

cultural influence ultimately aligned his evangelical brand with the prevailing racialized

social order.

Graham's New Evangelicalism

After the collapse of fundamentalism's credibility among the mainstream public in

the wake of the Scopes Trial of 1925, it appeared that liberal versions of evangelicalism

promoted by such figures as Fosdick could lay claim to being "true" evangelicalism without

challenge. Through much of the 1930s and 1940s, the growth and popularity of Fosdick's

Riverside Church served as a symbol of the cultural strength behind his liberal evangelical

brand. In the Postwar Era, a new challenger arose on the scene in New York City to reveal

that liberal evangelicalism had attained cultural dominance in symbol only. In 1957, Billy

Graham brought his new evangelicalism[82] to New York City to contend for the culturally

dominant position of being considered "true" evangelicalism among New Yorkers and

beyond. Bowman cites Graham's crusade in New York City in 1957 as a significant turning

point in the undoing of the cultural gains made by liberal evangelicalism. [83]

Graham's 1957 Crusade

Graham "warily" approached New York City for his first Crusade within Madison

Square Garden.[84] Yet Graham overcame his trepidation, because he recognized the strategic

---

[82] As is discussed in chapter one, this "new evangelicalism" was really a rebranding of the fundamentalism of the early twentieth century.

[83] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 282. Bowman seems to attribute liberal evangelicalism's loss of cultural influence within New York City also to their own complacency. Liberal evangelical churches gradually shifted into what became "mainline" churches during the mid- and late-twentieth century. Though these churches had been bastions of the white upper-class elite, by the 1960s they were already losing membership and cultural standing. They were depicted as aristocratic, secluded, and incapable of dealing with the social and cultural changes at work in the country. Although Riverside Church was recognized as "the national cathedral of mainline Protestantism" and held significant cultural pull through the remainder of the twentieth century, Bowman indicates that it was the fundamentalists who better adapted to the changing religious landscape after World War II first. See Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 278. See also James Hudnut-Beumler, *The Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: Riverside Church 1990), 2.

[84] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

significance of developing a presence for his new evangelicalism within New York City. Like

Straton, Graham named New York City as a place through which he would be able to preach

the Gospel and gain cultural influence across the entire United States.[85] Graham's approach

featured subtle shifts that distinguish his ministry from that of the former "face of

fundamentalism." Unlike his fundamentalist predecessors, who tended to make arcane

connections between the contemporary culture of New York City and prophetic books like

Ezekiel and Revelation, Graham normally took his examples from everyday voices such as

Time, *Newsweek*, the *Washington Post*, and the *New York Times*.[86] This gave Graham enough

mainstream appeal to draw in his core constituents, millions of mostly white, middle-class,

moderately conservative Protestants whom Grant Wacker has referred to as "Heartland

Americans."[87] It should also be noted at this point that the demographic with whom

Graham had such appeal across the United States was the same group that evangelicals of

any stripe had been vying for in New York City since the nineteenth century: white, middle-

class Protestants.

Graham's use of more recognizable, mainstream cultural sources was not the only

thing that distinguished him from his fundamentalist predecessors. Wacker notes a change

in his theological emphasis at the 1957 Crusade in New York City when compared to his

debut crusade in Los Angeles in 1949. The "inner theological scaffolding" remained

constant on such matters as God, humans, sin, Christ, salvation, judgment, heaven, and

---

[85] Billy Graham Library Blog, "Crusade City Spotlight: New York, NY," January 8, 2013, https://billygrahamlibrary.org/crusade-city-spotlight-new-york-ny/.

[86] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 59.

[87] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 1. In fact, Wacker identifies himself among these Heartland Americans for having traveled with his family from southwest Missouri to attend Graham's 1957 Crusade at the Madison Square Garden.

hell.[88] Even so, Graham's evangelical message was predicated more on receiving God's love

than bracing for God's judgement in the 1957 Crusade in New York City.[89] His sermons in

New York City did not come from the jeremiads of the Old Testament prophets, but from

the Gospels of the New Testament.[90] Alongside the traditional revivalist message of

salvation from sin and death, Graham offered New Yorkers a sense that their lives weren't

trivial. Each one of them was enmeshed within God's larger plan. Remaining on the outside

of God's plan meant a futile existence within the darkness of confusion and

meaninglessness but moving within God's providence as described in the Bible would bring

deliverance into the light of a meaningful world that made sense. Graham's dire statements

about the certainty of a coming apocalypse were easily overshadowed by his encouraging

message of the certainty of redemption.[91]

As another point of departure with Straton, Graham did not approach the social

setting in New York City with the same prophetic critique. Eschewing the role of social

reformer or political activist in which Straton had reveled, Graham indicated that he first

and foremost was a proclaimer of the message of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ.[92]

Graham further distanced himself from Straton and the previous generation of

---

[88] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 53-54.

[89] In Los Angeles, one of the sermon texts, "Prepare To Meet Thy God, O Israel," came from Amos 4:12, one of the prophets who fixated on challenging the moral corruption of his surrounding culture. After the sermon text, Graham cycled through a litany of sin—divorce, crime, addiction, materialism, sex, fear—that was designed to lash at the conscience of his audience. Next Graham stoked their fears with the reality of living in an uncertain world by reminding Angelenos of the peril of sudden death by cancer, heart attack, or traffic accident. Their only hope was to protect themselves through submitting to Christ, insisting that "without old fashioned revival we are done for." Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 54.

[90] In particular, John 3:16 "For God so loved the world...", Mark 10:17 "Good teacher...what must I do to inherit eternal life?", and Matthew 24:36 "No one knows about that day...but only the Father." Although love is more heavily emphasized in these passages, Graham does not let it obliterate the reality of God's judgment entirely. Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 54.

[91] Wacker notes that one journalist observed that in Graham's hands "the message of God's imminent judgment somehow has a soothing effect." Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 54.

[92] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 284.

fundamentalists in New York City through disciplined management of his public persona.

Schäfer notes that donning stylish outfits and clean cut looks in front of his audience at the

Madison Square Garden, Graham deliberately contrasted the image of the "religious

backcountry bacchanalia" and presented a formidable image of new evangelicalism as a

mainstream, transdenominational, transracial, and transethnic alternative to strict

fundamentalism.[93] Unlike Straton, the vitriolic doomsayer and strident warrior against an

immoral entertainment and consumer culture, Graham presented himself as a "friendly

neighbor here to help [everyone] move safely from today to the end of days."[94] Repudiating

much of the fundamentalist style allowed Graham to remake evangelicalism in "his own

sunny image," emphasizing the free choice of the individual and the individual as the

fundamental religious unit.[95] Interestingly, Bowman suggests that Graham's redefinition of

evangelicalism found its progenitor more in Fosdick's psychological approach to preaching

than in Straton's strident tirades. The reason for this is somewhat simple. Fosdick and

Graham shared the similar goal of reformatting the concept of conversion within

evangelicalism as a way to deal with the trials of everyday life, even though they had

profoundly different understandings of what form that reformatting should take.[96]

The 1957 Crusade in New York City allowed Graham to establish himself as the new

face of mainstream evangelicalism and the primary frontrunner to claim control over the

evangelical brand, and the attendant cultural influence that came along with that brand, in

New York City and beyond.[97] Bowman notes that by avoiding the public squabbles that

---

[93] Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 63.
[94] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 54.
[95] Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism*, 6.
[96] This is in contrast to Straton's view that the Word of God must be protected against being systematically dismantled by the consumer culture of the United States. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 285.
[97] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 90; Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 63.

occurred between Fosdick and Straton in the previous generation, Graham's new

evangelicalism was positioned to win appeal among a broader swath of white, conservative

Protestants in New York City. Graham's 1957 Crusade resembled more of a kinship with

the revivalist evangelicalism within nineteenth century New York City than with Straton's

militaristic fundamentalism or Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism.[98] Graham presented his

new evangelicalism as the "true" Christian faith in an effort to gather followers who would

in turn make his evangelical brand central to the culture of New York City. Like Straton,

Graham recognized the strategic significance of promoting his evangelical message in New

York City.[99] It gave Graham the platform not only to reach out to millions of people in

person at one time, but also placed his evangelical message within the city that had come to

define and shape much of the mainstream culture within the United States. Given the high

stakes of claiming the dominant evangelical brand in New York City, other groups in New

York City who contested Graham's new evangelicalism as the "true" evangelical brand did

not respond well to Graham's success at the 1957 Crusade. Before, during, and after the

1957 Crusade, Graham weathered criticism from both the lingering fundamentalists and

the liberal Protestant establishment in New York City.

Hostility Toward Graham's New Evangelical Brand

Three years before the 1957 Crusade, Graham decided to disassociate himself from

the fundamentalist label because of its combative connotations. He chose instead the more

general descriptor of "evangelical" or, even more simply, "Christian."[100] Up until the 1957

Crusade in New York City, Graham lingered in the liminal space between the strident

---

[98] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 285.
[99] Billy Graham Library Blog, "Crusade City Spotlight: New York, NY."
[100] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 90.

fundamentalism of the previous generation and the more irenic, politically centrist, and

culturally outward-looking evangelical movement that had begun to emerge in the post-

WWII period.[101] In the build-up to the 1957 Crusade, Graham received an invitation from

two different groups of local churches who wanted to partner with his organization. The

first came in 1954 from a consortium of conservative churches that included many of the

fundamentalists who were still active in New York City.[102] In 1955, the New York Council of

Churches (NYCC) offered Graham his second invitation. At that time, the NYCC represented

the majority of Protestant churches in New York City, many of whom had a decidedly

liberal bent to their Protestantism.[103] On the basis that the NYCC could offer much broader

support for the Crusade event, Graham accepted their invitation. The fundamentalists were

outraged that Graham passed over their more conservative consortium of churches to align

his Crusade with the more liberal NYCC. By doing so, it seemed to them that Graham valued

success over purity of doctrine, crossing the line between cooperation and compromise.

Having started as one of their own, Graham had betrayed the fundamentalists' trust, and

many of them never forgave him for it.[104] From 1957 forward fundamentalism largely

---

[101] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 90-91.

[102] This consortium of conservative churches was linked to the strict fundamentalists grouped within Carl McIntire's American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC). McIntire had formed this organization to preserve the fundamentalist separatism that he believed the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), which was the organizational center of the coalition for Graham's new evangelicalism, would water down with their emphasis on forming broad coalitions at the expense of maintaining strict boundaries and a uniform doctrinal purity. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 162.

[103] The New York Council of Churches is identified by Carnes as one of the "vehicles" through which Protestant liberals in New York City are trying to institutionalize "an internationalized, universalized, rationalized religion" in New York City. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

[104] For instance, when Bob Jones, who had been one of Graham's heroes, passed away in 1968, his son, Bob Jones Jr., telegrammed that Graham and his associates were not welcome at the funeral. Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 91. Jack Wyrtzen, the prominent New York City fundamentalist who founded Word of Life International, also shared this animosity against Graham for his cooperation with the NYCC. Randall Balmer, "Billy Graham: American Evangelist," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Dec. 27, 2018, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Billy-Graham. Wacker does point out, however, that a small minority of fundamentalists, A.W. Tozer being the most high profile among them, did continue to support

reinvented itself with an identity that was generally antagonistic toward the new

evangelicalism and not at all associated with the person of Billy Graham in particular.[105]

While working with the more mainline leaning NYCC ruptured Graham's

relationship with the fundamentalists, it did not endear him to New York City's mainline

Protestants[106] either. When Graham's crusade opened in Madison Square Garden in May

1957, the *Christian Century*, a mouthpiece for the mainline Protestants perspective, charged

Graham and his "experienced engineers of human experience" with using sentimentality to

manipulate the audiences that gathered in the Madison Square Garden.[107] Protestants who

favored a more liberal approach to the Christian faith generally dismissed, and ultimately

underestimated, Graham as another Straton. They believed that Graham's approach to

evangelicalism was too primitive to be successful long term in New York City, because it

created an emotional high rather than an authentic spiritual experience.[108]

Amplifying these critiques, Reinhold Niebuhr, whom Carnes refers to as "the high

priest of the Protestant intellectual establishment" during that period, joined the chorus of

theologians and pastors within the liberal Protestant camps who had rebuked Graham's

Crusades on the basis that the success of mass evangelism relied on the oversimplification

---

Graham and his evangelistic efforts. Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 91. See also Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism*, 163-165; Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism*, 52.

[105] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 91-92.

[106] Mainline Protestant is a more all-encompassing term than Bowman's "liberal evangelical." While liberal evangelicalism is used in connection with Fosdick, who self-identified his faith to be "evangelical," in the post-WWII era the more widely accepted term to describe the liberal end of Christianity in the United States was "mainline Protestants." For more description of what it means to be a "mainline Protestant," see Elesha J. Coffman, *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline* (New York: Oxford University Press 2013) 4-6.

[107] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 93.

[108] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 283. In fact, the paper labeled Graham's work as a "fundamentalist revival" put on by "canny, experienced engineers of the human condition." "Fundamentalist Revival," *Christian Century* (June 19, 1957), 749-751.

of the issues people face in the complex modern world.[109] As a particular affront, Graham

simply ignored the tradition of social ethical analysis in which Niebuhr specialized,

provoking Niebuhr to quip that "[Graham] thinks the problem of the atom bomb could be

solved by converting people to Christ."[110] During the preparations for the 1957 New York

Crusade, Graham extended an olive branch to Niebuhr by offering to meet with him.[111]

Niebuhr refused. He knew Graham was an affable and charming person, and Niebuhr had

no intention of being disarmed by Graham's sunny disposition. Niebuhr blasted Graham's

Crusade in New York relentlessly, charging that Graham employed all "the high pressure

techniques of modern salesmanship" to sell Jesus in the same way that Madison Avenue

sold their wares.[112] He deemed Graham's evangelicalism as an "obscurantist version of the

Christian faith" that "promises a new life, not through painful religious experience but

merely by signing a decision card.… A miracle of regeneration is promised at a painless

price.…"[113] Along with several other theologians and pastors within liberal evangelicalism,

Niebuhr considered Billy Graham a pietistic fundamentalist throwback who simplified

"every issue of life" through simplistic preaching that reduced complex problems to pious

slogans.[114] Niebuhr argued that Graham recycled catchphrases of an outmoded Protestant

individualism and literalism and was both appalled and embarrassed that people were

---

[109] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 8.

[110] Reinhold Niebuhr, "Literalism, Individualism, and Billy Graham," *Christian Century,* May 23, 1956, 64.

[111] Gary Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham: Modernity, Complexity, White Supremacism, Justice, Ambiguity," in *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 144; Carnes, "Religions of the City," 8.

[112] Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Billy Graham Campaign," *Messenger*, June 4, 1957, 5. See also Carnes, "Religions of the City," 8.

[113] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 93-94.

[114] Reinhold Niebuhr, "A Theologian Says Evangelist Is Oversimplifying the Issues of Life," *Life*, July 1, 1957, 92.

flocking to the "old nonsense" of a more traditional evangelical, if not outright fundamentalist, religion.[115]

Niebuhr also observed that Graham's simplistic and individual-focused mentality was a stumbling block on social issues. Racial prejudice was not as obvious a sin as theft or adultery, Niebuhr reasoned, because racism was embedded in the customs and social structures of communities. Graham's evangelicalism had no space for this concept, requiring racism, like any other sin, to be identified only in individual action rather than in social systems. Racial sin therefore did not prompt the emotional crisis among Graham's audience the way that adultery or other similar sins did. Graham's popularity as evidenced by the massive crowds that gathered at the 1957 Crusade galled Niebuhr. After witnessing the collapse of the threat of fundamentalism in 1925, Niebuhr feared he was now witnessing its rebirth in Graham's Crusade some three decades later. Niebuhr had the sense that Graham could lift evangelicalism out of its sectarian ghetto and, like other mainline Protestants who wished to preserve control over the public brand of the Christian faith in New York City, considered it a disaster that millions of people regarded Billy Graham an exemplar of Christianity.[116]

Niebuhr's fears proved to be well founded. After the 1957 Crusade in New York City, Graham emerged as not only the face of the new evangelicalism, but also as its primary spokesperson.[117] In the subsequent decades, Graham and his new evangelicals commanded the public, culturally mainstream brand of evangelicalism in New York City and across the United States. While Dorrien notes that the Protestant mainline church held the center of

---

[115] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 141.
[116] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 143, 147.
[117] Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 303.

161

American culture into the early 1970s,[118] Graham's new evangelicals represented in the

National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) became a juggernaut shortly after the 1957

Crusade. They capitalized on Graham's fame and the success of *Christianity Today* to move

from a fringe evangelical faction in the early 1950s to a cultural powerhouse by the

1980s.[119] Laying claim to the dominant brand for mainstream evangelicalism meant that

anyone outside of Graham's new evangelicalism fell outside the boundary of the credible

and respectable Protestant landscape. By the 1970s, the mainstream culture in New York

City and the whole of the United States seemed to accept Graham's definition of the word

"evangelical," as *Newsweek* and *Time* declared 1976 to be "the year of the evangelical."[120]

Unmentioned in these articles was Riverside Church.[121] That these articles neglected to

mention Riverside Church signaled that unlike the fundamentalist collapse during the

dramatic spectacle of the 1925 Scopes Trial, Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism had lost its

controlling share over the definitive brand of evangelicalism in an even more astonishing

fashion, silently.[122]

 When Keller ramped up his ministry to young urban professionals in late twentieth-

century New York City, he preached as if Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism had not suffered

---

[118] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 155. Although Carnes seems to contest Dorrien's assessment, stating that the Protestant establishment of mainline churches declined dramatically from 1950 to 1990 in New York City. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 9.

[119] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 155.

[120] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 286. "Religion: Counting Souls," *Time* (October 4, 1976), 56; "Born Again! The Year of the Evangelical," *Newsweek* (October 26, 1976). These articles named 1976 the "year of the evangelical" in part because the people of the United States had just elected Jimmy Carter, who professed to be a "born-again Christian," as president.

[121] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 286. Bowman notes this would have been a bitter disappointment to Fosdick as he considered Riverside Church to be the expression of the capital form of evangelicalism.

[122] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 286. Further turning the tables on liberal evangelicalism, Bowman notes that as Graham and his new evangelicals grew more at ease with the consumer culture in the United States, the liberal evangelicals of the 1960s and 1970s in New York City actually became more distant from it, adopting a prophetic stance against American culture that resembled the fundamentalists of the early twentieth century. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 286-292.

this silent demise some decades earlier. The flexibility on such doctrines as the Incarnation, substitutionary atonement, and salvation through Christ alone displayed in Fosdick's preaching became one of the targets of the apologetic engagement Keller deployed in his sermons. Although employing an intellectualized style of preaching similar to that of Fosdick, Keller's relentless defense of traditional Christian doctrine over liberalizing tendencies aligned the content of his sermons more closely with Straton's verbal tirades against liberalism and modernism. While Graham did everything he could to distance his mid twentieth-century evangelical brand from the conflicts of the early twentieth century, Keller's late twentieth-century combative apologetic that advocated the sensibility of his evangelical brand reified the early twentieth-century fundamentalist-modernist debates in New York City.

Two Positive Steps on Race

As control over the contested brand for evangelicalism and its influence within the cultural mainstream passed to Graham and his new evangelicals, the complicity of the previous generation of liberal evangelicals and fundamentalists with the prevailing racialized social order in New York City remained intact. When the civil rights movement progressed during the 1950s, white evangelicals could no longer ignore the issue of race relations. Graham, as the "public face" of the new evangelicalism, had to figure out the social mission for this movement with respect to America's "original sin" of racism.[123]

---

[123] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 149. Referring to racism as "America's original sin" has been popularized by Jim Wallis in his bestselling book *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press 2015). Dorrien cannot be faulted for not referring to Wallis' book though, as his article was written seven years before Wallis' book was published.

At the 1957 Crusade, Graham did indeed take some significant steps toward encouraging racial integration within the racially diverse cultural setting of New York City. One was to invite Martin Luther King, Jr. to pray the invocation on July 18, 1957. Introducing King, Graham thanked him for taking time to offer the opening prayer and praised him for leading a "great social revolution."[124] In the prayer, King in turn thanked Graham and asked God's blessing on the upcoming meetings of the Crusade. Graham seemed to have been moved by King's "great social revolution." Four days after having King share the stage with him at the Madison Square Garden, Graham appeared at a gathering of 8,000 people, mostly African Americans. Graham was reported as telling that audience "color is meaningless in the sight of God" and "some people are not going to get to heaven because they will not feel at home."[125] While Graham meant well, his statement "color is meaningless" actually laid the groundwork for the "color-blind racism" that perpetuated the racialized social order of the late twentieth century the promoted systemic advantages to whites over other races. The color-blind racism of the late twentieth century, and the way in which statements such as "color is meaningless" ultimately contributed to it, is featured heavily in the later racial analysis of the content of Keller's sermons.[126] Keller, like Graham, meant well, but his lack of awareness of the mechanisms of color-blind racism during the late-twentieth century caused his sermons to reflect the prevailing racialized

---

[124] "Invocation Delivered at Billy Graham Evangelicalist Crusade," July 18, 1957, New York, quoted in Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 125. See also Michael G. Long, *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community: America's Evangelist and the Dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 99-107.

[125] "Graham Says Country Needs 'Anti-Segregation Legislation,'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 27, 1957, https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2205&dat=19570723&id=UuclAAAAIBAJ&sjid=bPUFAAAAIBAJ&pg=2636,4391383.

[126] This racial analysis is set forth in chapter four.

social order much like the evangelical brands of the previous generations of evangelical leaders in New York City.

Whether King was aware of Graham's preaching in Brooklyn four days after sharing the stage with him at the Madison Square Garden is uncertain. In any case, King sent a missive to Graham about a month after the New York Crusade. King thanked Graham for "the stand [that] you have taken in the area of race relations. You have courageously brought the Christian gospel to bear on the question of race in all of its urgent dimensions."[127] Although Graham and King did not explicitly align themselves with each other's work, it seems clear that King was encouraging Graham to see the power a white person in his position had to disrupt the underlying racialized social order within U.S. culture.[128]

Graham took another positive step toward promoting racial integration at the 1957 Crusade when he noticed that his audience in Madison Square Garden was overwhelmingly white. While this was common to the audiences at Graham's previous crusades, in New York City the homogenously white group bothered him. New York City's racial diversity was not being reflected in the audience that gathered to hear Graham preach. Channeling the binary zeitgeist of the civil rights era, Graham seemed more inclined to want to increase the attendance of African Americans rather than obtain a true cross-section of the population that represented the totality of the city's racial diversity. Graham's inclination to understand the "race issue" more in terms of a black-white binary became evident when he

---

[127] Martin Luther King, Jr. to Billy Graham, August 31, 1957, quoted in Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 125.
[128] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 125-126. In spite of this encouragement, Dorrien and Burrow indicate that King would most likely have found Graham nowhere near the white evangelical leader needed for those desperate times. See Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 151-152; Rufus Burrow, Jr., "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," in *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 167.

brought in the Reverend Howard Jones, an African American pastor from Cleveland. Jones

arrived in New York City during the Crusade to counsel Graham's team on how to make

better inroads with the African American community.[129]

Jones' first piece of advice was for Graham and his team to take the crusade to

African Americans instead of waiting for them to come to him. This advice spurred Graham

to organize the meeting in Brooklyn. Graham also scheduled a meeting in Harlem that

gathered in around 10,000, again mostly African Americans. Graham encouraged Jones to

stay and be an ongoing presence within his team at the crusade. Graham gave Jones a place

on the crusade platform as a symbolic gesture that promoted racial integration to the

mostly white crowd who had gathered at the Garden. The symbolic gesture did not have

the full effect Graham might have intended. Jones found himself sitting alone as the white

participants vacated the seats close to him and moved to take chairs on the other side of

the stage. Even so, Jones persevered and remained on the team, and by the end of the

crusade, Wacker comments that the African American presence in the audience might have

risen to as much as 20 percent.[130]

Two Criticisms on Race

In spite of making these positive steps toward supporting the cause of racial

integration at the 1957 Crusade, his ambivalence on civil rights became clear in the actions

Graham did not take during that crusade. While Graham reached out to the African

American community, he did so largely within the segregationist racial boundaries

established during the Jim Crow era. Graham did not organize marches in the streets of

---

[129] Long, *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community*, 99-107.

[130] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 124-125. In fact, Jones later joined Graham's team as an associate evangelist about one year after the 1957 Crusade in New York City.

Manhattan or otherwise protest the overt and implicit racial segregation in the transportation services, restaurants, and hiring practices within New York City. Harvey Cox notes that at a time when segregationists were labeling nonviolent demonstrators as lawless, Graham did not show solidarity with the movement by joining any marches or speaking at any rallies.[131] In fact, as a law-and-order evangelist Graham eschewed these activities. Graham insisted that the only way to address social problems, including racism, was through the conversion of individual hearts by his evangelical gospel message. For this reason, Graham's actions to promote racial integration during the 1957 Crusade were largely symbolic, and ultimately opened up Graham to two main criticisms.

The first criticism is that Graham did not take a firmer stand on civil rights, because alignment with this movement would have inhibited Graham from consolidating his standing and influence with the white cultural mainstream of New York City, and ultimately, the United States. Dorrien and Burrow indicate that at a planning meeting for the 1957 New York crusade, King dreamed of a Graham/King crusade that would preach to the integrated audiences in the North, proceed to border states, and then move into the Deep South. Graham balked for fear of alienating his mostly white base and limited King's public presence with him to the invocation at the beginning of the 1957 New York Crusade. In fact, Graham's anxiety over the risk of losing popularity among his white evangelical base by publicly cooperating with King prompted him to never invite King to appear with him again after the 1957 Crusade.[132] Keenly attuned to the racial anxiety of his white

---

[131] Harvey Cox, "The Lasting Imprint of Billy Graham: Recollections and Prognostications," in *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, ed. Michael G. Long (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 220.

[132] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 152; Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 167.

conservative base, Graham knew he had very limited capacity to acknowledge wrongdoing against African Americans.[133] He often reflected the negative judgment of the tactics of the civil rights movement held by his white evangelical base, publicly opposing any coercive integration[134] or civil disobedience and specifically denouncing the demonstrations and sit-ins of the civil rights movement.[135] These views aligned with moderate white ministers who opposed marches and sit-ins of the civil rights movement while claiming to support its ultimate objective.[136]

In addition to anxiety over losing his white base, an argument can be made that Graham also approached the civil rights movement with ambivalence, if not outright disapproval during its early years in the 1950s, to preserve his influence and standing with some of the most powerful white figures within the United States. Cox suspected that Graham's position on the civil rights movement had been corrupted as a result of Graham's friendship with Presidents Johnson and Nixon.[137] Graham's "obvious yearning to stay on intimate terms with those at the peak of power had marred his vision," and Cox had hoped for Graham to have done better.[138] Burrow supports Cox's observations by noting that all through Graham's career, his social consciousness seemed more influenced by the static

---

[133] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 149.

[134] Cox notes that when President Lyndon Johnson advanced the Civil Rights Act that would force racial integration through Congress, *Christianity Today*, one of the primary mouthpieces for Graham's new evangelical brand, did not offer any explicit editorial support whatsoever. Cox, "Lasting Imprint," 220. Dorrien follows Cox's thought on this, indicating that during the King years, Graham was only slightly more progressive than *Christianity Today*, which defended voluntary segregation over and against any coercive or disruptive measures. Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 152.

[135] Cox, "Lasting Imprint," 220; Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 152.

[136] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 152.

[137] Cox, "Lasting Imprint," 220-221.

[138] Cox was an active member of Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and participated in the marches and civil disobedience alongside others in the civil rights movement. Cox's suspicion was shared by his colleagues at that time who were also "disappointed and angered" with Graham's distance from the civil rights movement. Cox, "Lasting Imprint," 221.

values and stances of the powerful and privileged white elite than by those forced to the margins of society. Graham's unwillingness to accept the role of ethical prophet denied him the autonomy necessary to freely oppose U.S. Presidents and other white cultural and societal leaders when they acted contrary to God's expectations. It seems likely that Graham projected himself as a law-and-order evangelist who had a general disdain for the confrontations initiated by the racially marginalized at least in part to retain his relationship with these culturally elite white leaders.[139] By rejecting King's prophetic tactics of nonviolent resistance as a means to challenge the unjust and callous policies and practices of the powerful, Graham prioritized maintaining relationships with those powerful leaders over changing the white supremacist culture embedded within New York City and the United States.[140] Dorrien flatly concludes that Graham's social consciousness was compromised by his "intimate access" with the powerful and his "lust for political influence."[141]

Burrow suggests that this law-and-order stance stems from Graham's privileged social location. Had Graham been among the socially, economically, and politically oppressed, who were victimized by violence routinely, as King had been, it is difficult to imagine he would have held to the position of law-and-order above all that most moderate whites favored.[142] Preoccupied by his zeal to amass ever greater cultural influence for his new evangelicalism within the mainstream culture, Graham failed to understand the effect

---

[139] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 162-163. While in the 1960s, Graham conceded that the protest marches and civil disobedience aroused the conscience of the nation, the potential for anarchy was always the greater evil for Graham—much more so than the unjust laws of discrimination and segregation. Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 170.
[140] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 164.
[141] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 156.
[142] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 171.

his whiteness had on his stance toward the civil rights movement. Graham's self-reflective

capacity on his own whiteness seems limited not only because he did not prioritize the

eradication of racial justice as much as was warranted, but also because Graham never

comprehended the "race problem" as a white problem.[143] Michael Long has indicated that

"[n]o matter what he said in later years, Graham was no integrationist, at least in the sense

that King and others in the civil rights movement were integrationists."[144] Dorrien even

goes so far as to suggest that Graham interpreted the moral revolution of the King years as

a white phenomenon in which white people let go of customs that soiled their own virtue

and opened their institutions to ungrateful African Americans.[145]

The second criticism of Graham's approach to the civil rights movement reveals a

similar lack of understanding of the socially privileged position Graham occupied as a white

celebrity evangelist during and after the 1957 New York Crusade. Critics have pointed out

that Graham's insistence that racism must be understood as one of many individual sins

denied his new evangelicalism the tools needed to adequately address the racial injustice

within the social and cultural systems of New York City, and the broader United States.

Burrow points out that Graham functioned as if the solution to social problems could be

achieved only by born-again individuals alone, exhibiting a "perfectionistic illusion" that a

converted individual is free from the hold of sin and the only real hope for improving social

conditions.[146] This individualistic logic of Graham's evangelical theology "disparaged and

---

[143] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 149. Dorrien doesn't let Niebuhr off the hook in this respect either, indicating that Niebuhr too fell short of giving racial justice the high priority it deserved.
[144] Long, *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community*, 114.
[145] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 153.
[146] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 165. Demonstrating this is a long-standing criticism of Graham's evangelicalism, Burrow cites a similar argument made by William McLoughlin in 1959. See William McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), 526.

even deplored collective efforts at reform."[147] Graham did not acknowledge that social, political, and economic structures are themselves immoral and not simply composed of immoral individuals, and Graham's sermons generally neglected to charge individuals with the responsibility of applying Christian principles to social issues like racism and war. [148]

Niebuhr found this deficiency to be on display at Graham's 1957 New York Crusade, and disparaged it mercilessly. Acknowledging that Graham seemed personally opposed to racial bigotry, Niebuhr chided Graham for the failure to preach against racism and for his treatment of the problem of racial justice with the same revivalist superficiality and perfectionism with which Graham handled other complex theological and ethical issues.[149] This perfectionistic approach was obviously discredited, so argued Niebuhr, on the ground that the Antebellum South had had plenty of revivals and conversions, but that had not stopped the white slave masters from treating African Americans as chattel. Dorrien takes it a step further and appeals to Graham's own life to discredit this individualistic approach to racial injustice. Graham experienced a born-again conversion experience at the age of 16 at a segregated revival and confessed later in life that "[e]ven after my conversion, I felt no guilt in thinking of my dark-skinned brothers in the usual and patronizing and paternalistic way."[150] Graham's personal trajectory after his conversion also supported this sentiment, as he had studied at Bob Jones University, joined the staunchly segregationist Southern

---

[147] McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 526.

[148] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 165. Burrow notes that McLoughlin deemed this individualistic ethic of Graham as "escapist because it ignored the social complexity of evil" rendering it "shallowly optimistic because it assumed that evangelization was the simple cure for all contemporary problems." See McLoughlin, *Modern Revivalism*, 527.

[149] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 142.

[150] Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 150; Marshall Frady, *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 67-69. Dorrien notes that Graham rarely verbalized this remembrance as it undermined Graham's self-image as an agent of racial reconciliation and his vocational assurance that born-again conversion was the answer.

Baptist Convention, preached at countless segregated Youth for Christ meetings, and, in the late 1940s, conducted numerous segregated crusades in the South. In the early 1950s, Graham equivocated on segregation, sometimes refusing to address segregated audiences and sometimes backsliding.[151]

Burrow again makes the point that social location played into the Graham's willingness to flatten out the social complexities of racial injustice by reducing it to an issue of individual sin. As the white leader of the new evangelical movement, Graham wore cultural blinders that precluded him from recognizing that it takes more than proclaiming the Gospel, accepting Jesus, or calling on God to bring about racial justice within society. King, as an African American man, worked from a social location that did not afford him the luxury of seeing the church as "a feel-good institution whose ministry is divorced from the devastating social occurrences of the day."[152] Instead, King's social location engendered him with a sense of urgency to engage in ethical prophecy and bring about a new social order of justice. Graham, and other well-meaning whites, simply did not sense the same urgency with respect to the civil rights movement. Burrow points out that had Graham, like King, known personally what it was like to be denied respect and dignity because of the color of his skin, Graham would almost assuredly have had a different sense of urgency about racial injustice.[153]

---

[151] For instance, at a 1953 Crusade in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Graham tore down the dividing ropes, but then did nothing to disturb the racial segregation at subsequent crusades in Dallas, Texas and Asheville, North Carolina. Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 150. In fact, just one year after the 1957 Crusade, Graham invited the segregationist Texas governor to accept an honored role at the San Antonio crusade. King pleaded with Graham to disinvite Daniel in order to prevent his earlier rejections of segregation and racism from being eclipsed, but was rebuffed through a condescending telegram from Grady Wilson, one of Graham's lieutenants. Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 167-168.

[152] Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 174.

[153] In 1965, Graham took constructive action in response to the brutal murder (and the national outcry) of the Rev. James Reeb, a white Unitarian pastor from Boston who offered his help in Selma in 1965. However,

A key point to make here is that while Graham recognized racism as an individual

sin, Graham had no awareness of the privileged position his whiteness allowed him to

occupy within the white supremacist society of New York City and the broader United

States. As a result, whatever impact Graham might have had in helping white evangelicals

at the 1957 Crusade to break free of segregation, Graham's new evangelicalism retained a

complicity with the racialized social order that can be identified in the previous

generations of liberal evangelicals and fundamentalists within New York City.[154] Even so,

Graham's historical context within mid-twentieth century New York City complexified

identifying this complicity. Fosdick and Straton were sealed within a racialized social order

in which overt discrimination based on race and white supremacy were implemented and

maintained as a matter of law. That made identifying racism much easier. As white

members of a society who upheld these discriminatory laws, Fosdick and Straton could

therefore be considered de facto racists who supported a racialized social order that openly

promoted white supremacy. During Graham's ministry in New York City, the racially

discriminatory laws that were in force in Straton and Fosdick's era were being repealed

and replaced with laws that prohibited discrimination based on race. Graham's overt

support for racial integration suggested that he was distancing himself from the racialized

---

Graham had no similar response to the senseless murder of the African American Jimmy Lee Jackson by a white policeman near Selma only weeks before Reeb's death. No national outcry sprang from this event and King lamented the divergent responses to the two deaths. Burrow, "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community," 174-175.

[154] Dorrien is careful not to limit the racist tendencies identified in Graham to the new evangelicals, pointing out that Niebuhr himself did not take the risks that he asked Graham to take. During the years leading up to the 1957 Crusade in New York City, Niebuhr did not ask his white liberal base to interrogate their casual racism for fear of offending them. After all, these white liberals considered themselves to be above any racial biases. They never contemplated that eliminating racial bias would require them to work to dismantle an entire national culture of white supremacism. Since Graham was confronted with a much more direct racial bias in his audiences, his failure to challenge their racial bias made him an easy target for Niebuhr. In reality, according to Dorrien, Niebuhr did not challenge the underlying white racism within his own audience much more than Graham did. Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 153-154.

social order to some degree. It takes a second level of analysis to uncover Graham's implicit endorsement, or at least tacit acceptance, of the underlying racialized social order that privileged whites over other races. The racialized social order of Graham's mid-twentieth-century context existed within social customs and practices that changes in the law did not address. This second level of analysis is developed more fully in chapter four as it is necessary to uncover the even more subtle racialized social order of late twentieth-century New York City. Through this second level of analysis, Keller's ministry can be seen as repeating the twentieth-century pattern of becoming complicit with the prevailing mode of the racialized social order that had begun within the ministries of the previous generations of evangelical leaders in New York City.

Decades Missing Central Evangelical Leader

After the 1957 Crusade in New York City, Graham emerged as the celebrity evangelist who was the face of the new evangelicalism. His crusade had been an enormous success. The event ran a total of sixteen weeks, from May 15 to September 1, and at the end counters recorded a staggering 2,400,000 cumulative attendees and 61,000 inquirers.[155] Graham's new evangelicalism had made inroads into New York City by bestowing its message of grace and salvation, but the challenge became sustaining this new evangelicalism in New York City in the wake of Graham's success. Unlike Fosdick and Straton, Graham had no intention of staying in New York City, leaving others to advance the cause to spread his new evangelicalism among New Yorkers. By leaving New York City after the 1957 Crusade, there would seem to be an opportunity for Fosdick's liberal evangelicals at Riverside Church to reassert their control over the public brand for evangelicalism in

---

[155] Wacker, *America's Pastor*, 13-14.

New York City. Liberal evangelicals could rally to the cause of the civil rights movement to demonstrate to New Yorkers what a truly socially engaged evangelicalism looked like.[156]

Riverside Church indeed took up this call. Although by the 1950s, Riverside Church had lost a controlling share over the evangelical brand in New York City, Riverside Church continued to exert a significant influence among the leftover liberal evangelicals in the city.[157] Robert James McCracken, Fosdick's immediate successor, became a powerful and unequivocal voice in favor of civil rights. Inspired by Fosdick's contention that evangelicalism should facilitate a common unity among the diverse populations of the city, McCracken delivered a sermon in 1955 entitled "Discrimination—the Shame of Sunday Morning" that clearly denounced segregation in worship.[158] Benjamin Mays, president of Morehouse University, praised the message and Riverside's African American membership began to grow. In 1977, Riverside Church installed William Sloane Coffin, a former chaplain at Yale and an anti-war, civil rights activist, and within a year of his taking office, the membership at Riverside had grown to 20,000, with many of these members being African American. Yet in spite of these successes at Riverside Church, their clear message that evangelicals must engage in social action in favor of civil rights, while appealing to African

---

[156] Liberal evangelicals largely blew this opportunity. Bowman indicates that although liberal evangelicals in New York City in the late 1950s and 1960s came to be gripped by the moral impetus of the civil rights movement, they entered the struggle too late. Bowman points out that in the early years of the movement, evangelicals of any stripe, conservative or liberal, emulated Fosdick's complacency on the question of race relations. During these years, the *Christian Century* tended to temporize, urge restraint and prudence, and generally avoided taking a position. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 287.

[157] Martin Marty and Jon Butler indicate that in spite of the success of Graham and the new evangelicals, Riverside Church helped to shape American theology for several decades after its inception in 1933. See Martin M. Marty and Jon Butler, "Religion," in *Encyclopedia of New York* 2nd Edition, Kenneth Jackson ed. (2010): 1095-1097.

[158] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 288.

Americans in New York City, was not enough to wrestle the public brand of evangelicalism away from Graham's white new evangelicals.[159]

Even so, the new evangelicals in New York City had their own problems. They had trouble leveraging the cultural standing of Graham's mainstream evangelicalism. During the next three decades or so after the 1957 Crusade, no central figure or church functioned as the symbolic flag for the new evangelicalism Graham had promoted. That is not to say that the new evangelicals had no presence within New York City. Shortly after the 1957 Crusade people aligned with the new evangelical movement worked to institutionalize what Graham had begun. This institutionalization often took the form of parachurch organizations who entered New York City in an attempt to bring salvation to both the elite and marginalized alike. For instance, in the 1950s Youth for Christ, an evangelical fellowship that targeted young adults and was affiliated with Graham, received the sponsorship of Calvary Baptist Church and began to organize in New York.[160] Other parachurch organizations came to New York City over the next couple decades. One such parachurch organization was Campus Crusade for Christ. This organization began as a ministry to bring a Graham-style evangelical message to college students. Other evangelical parachurch organizations that targeted college students as their core ministry, such as

---

[159] Part of the reason for this failure was in the inability of liberal evangelicals to band together into the kind of cohesive movement that Graham had formed for his new evangelicalism. In 1973, a self-identified "evangelical left," including such figures as Jim Wallis and Tony Campolo, met in Chicago to rail against the Vietnam War, for measures to end segregation, and to promote the expansion of the social welfare net. In spite of their similar social positions, the theological perspective of the "evangelical left" had more in common with Graham's new evangelicalism than with Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism. Besides, this evangelical left movement foundered quickly amid the challenges of accommodating pluralistic views while maintaining a centralized, core vision. Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 292. See also "Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern" (1973) at https://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about-esa/history/chicago-declaration-evangelical-social-concern/; Miller, *Age of Evangelicalism*, 8-10; Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 145-146.

[160] Bowman, *The Urban Pulpit*, 283.

InterVarsity and the Navigators, also came to New York City during this era. Campus Crusade has been singled out as they play an important part in the development of Tim Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church during the latter decades of the twentieth century. Campus Crusade also started ministries for the elite professionals of New York City who lived on the Upper East Side. These organizations were primarily controlled by white leadership and dutifully reached out to various populations within the city with their Graham-style evangelical message. Even so, none of these white leaders within Youth for Christ or Campus Crusade for Christ turned the attention of a broad section of New Yorkers within the cultural mainstream toward their evangelical faith as Graham had done.

Instead, the white evangelical mainstream presence in New York City floundered during the three decades subsequent to Graham's 1957 Crusade. Carnes notes that during the 1960-1970s, the white native-born evangelical churches were shrinking as a result of their failure to be innovative, lapsing into a defensiveness that put them out of step with their cultural surroundings.[161] Carnes' observation that these churches grew defensive suggests that leaders in these white, mainstream evangelical churches did not follow Graham's lead in avoiding critiques against the perceived evils of the consumerism and commercialism within the culture of New York City. Instead, they seemed to revert to a confrontational, oppositional stance toward the consumer-centered and commercially driven culture of New York City that resembled Straton's strident, prophetic position.[162]

---

[161] Carnes, "New Hope," 36.
[162] It is important to note that Carnes also lists a lack of innovation as part of what hurt these evangelical churches.

This oppositional stance was not the only thing damaging the numbers and vitality

within these white evangelical churches in New York City during the two decades following

Graham's 1957 Crusade. White evangelicals simply left New York City in droves during this

period. Race was a critical factor in propelling "white flight" from cities during the second

half of the twentieth century.[163] As a result of changes in U.S. immigration laws in 1965[164]

and the continuing migration of African Americans from the South,[165] the white

evangelicals in New York City found themselves living in an increasingly racially diverse

society. Carnes points out that as a result of these factors, New York City evolved over the

latter decades of the twentieth century into "the most ethnically diverse place on the

globe."[166] These white evangelicals perceived the influx of people of color as a threat to the

existing social order within the cities. Although strategies of intimidation and strict zoning

laws were crafted to restrict people of color, particularly African Americans, from moving

into white city neighborhoods, these measures ultimately failed as a result of the

protections against racial discrimination promulgated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. After

these measures failed, the white people who attended evangelical churches simply began to

abandon the city to move out into the more homogenously white suburbs.[167] Although

---

[163] Michael T. Mulder and James K.A. Smith, "Subdivided By Faith? An Historical Account of Evangelicals and the City," *Christian Scholar Review* 38.4 (Summer 2009), 421.

[164] Carnes indicates that the Hart-Cellar Immigration Act of 1965 initiated the latest wave of "religiously significant immigration," causing the population of New York City to be more than one-third immigrant. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 13.

[165] Butler asserts that this "Great Migration of African Americans from the South" transformed New York City's populations throughout the twentieth century, starting as early as 1900. Butler, "God, Gotham, and Modernity," 27.

[166] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 13. Carnes supports this point by arguing that 196 nationalities have passed through New York City schools and that by 2000 approximately 37.5% of the city's population was foreign born. This diversity rivals the high point of immigration for New York City during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century when 40% of the city's population was foreign born. See Carnes, "Religions in the City," 12-14.

[167] Mulder and Smith note that the historical persistence of residential segregation serves as one of the root social problems that hinders impoverished segments of the African American population from moving toward

Graham had generated enormous enthusiasm and allegiance to his new evangelicalism during the 1957 Crusade, its cultural influence in New York City waned as these factors prompted white evangelicals to leave the city over the next couple decades. As a result, during the 1970s through the mid-1980s, Manhattan's Billy Graham evangelicals could "count on one hand" the number of vital evangelical churches, the most prominent being First Christian Missionary Alliance, the charismatic One Flock, and Calvary Baptist Church.[168]

This does not mean that New York City was devoid of any vibrant ministry in the decades following Graham's 1957 Crusade. Carnes identifies the vibrancy not in the white evangelical churches that had been established in New York City, but in immigrant evangelical churches[169] that originated in the 1970s. As a result of the changes in the immigration laws, some of the fastest growing churches and ministries during this era served immigrant populations, particularly from Asia.[170] The New York Presbyterian Korean Church began in 1970 in Long Island City in Queens and had 6,000 members by the end of the twentieth century, almost all of whom are immigrants from South Korea.[171]

---

a better socio-economic status. Mulder and Smith, "Subdivided By Faith?", 421. For further description of the connection between residential segregation and the perpetually low socio-economic status of segments of the African American population, see Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[168] This is the same Calvary Baptist Church from which Straton conducted his fundamentalist ministry in the early twentieth century. Carnes, "New Hope," 34.

[169] Carnes actually refers to these immigrant churches as "evangelical" ministries. He does that because he employs an expansive definition of the term "evangelical" as is noted in Chapter one. However, as this dissertation has indicated, the application of the general term "evangelical" signifies "conservative, Christianity, whiteness, and a specific political affiliation and economic class." See Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13. Given this association, these immigrant churches who share many theological beliefs with evangelicals should be distinguished from mainstream evangelical churches. Following Beulah's lead, the term "immigrant evangelicals" will be used to signify this differentiation among the ministries catalogued by Carnes.

[170] Since the population low point of 7 million in 1980, New York City has added more than 1 million people to its city census, and from 2000-2004 over 100,000 new foreigners have settled in New York City each year. Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

[171] Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

According to Carnes, Korean ethnic institutes and seminaries sustained the Korean church denominational orientation within the pluralistic culture of New York City, all the while importing the more conservative theology of Korea. As a result, the New York Korean Presbyterian Church tended to be more conservative than their denominational partners in the city.[172] In 1982, the Chinese Christian Herald Crusades began its international holistic ministry on a card table in front of a Chinatown bookstore.[173] Today this organization still functions as a Christian social service organization that serves the needs of Chinese-Americans, many of whom are immigrants from Asia.[174] The Church of Grace to Fujianese[175] has also served incoming immigrant populations. It was founded in 1988 on the Lower East Side and consists of primarily Fujianese and Chinese immigrants, also serving the 2nd and 3rd generation of these Chinese immigrant families, and has 800 members and spun off five churches in as many years.[176]

During this period, other vibrant domestic churches and ministries cropped up as well. Starting in 1975, New Grace Center has developed into a multicultural Christian school that today serves 207 families in the East New York Area.[177] Although located in one of the high crime areas of New York City during the 1970s and early 1980s, New Grace Center provided a safe, Christian-based education among a racially diverse group of children. They decorated the exterior of the school with brightly painted murals of students

---

[172] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 10.

[173] Carnes, "New Hope," 34.

[174] See the website for Chinese Christian Herald Crusades, accessed on August 29, 2017, http://www.cchcla.org/en/.

[175] For more description of Church of Grace to Fujianese, see the post on FaithStreet, accessed on August 30, 2017, https://www.faithstreet.com/church/church-of-grace-to-fujianese-new-york-ny.

[176] Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

[177] Carnes, "New Hope," 34. See also the website for New Grace Center, accessed on August 29, 2017, http://www.newgracecenter.com/about/.

reciting Scripture as a means of deterring criminal activity in the area.[178] Here's Life Inner

City, a compassion ministry affiliated with Campus Crusade for Christ devoted to

combating poverty in New York City (and other major cities in the United States),[179] started

in 1983 and served as a key hub of evangelical networking.[180] In 1985, the Robert

Johansson's Evangel Christian School[181] in Long Island City began its vision to grow into a

school with grade K-12.[182] In 1987, Pete and Geri Scazzero, both white, founded the

multiethnic ministry that became New Life Community Church in Queens.[183] Carnes also

notes that several of New York City's African American churches assumed a more

conservative theological position within the latter decades of the twentieth century and

could also be grouped into this grouping of multi-ethnic evangelicalism[184] in New York

City.[185]

These immigrant evangelical churches and multi-ethnic evangelical churches and

ministries did not follow in the Fosdick-Straton-Graham tradition of evangelicalism within

New York City. While these ministries shared similar theological views, particularly with

---

[178] Carnes, "New Hope," 33.

[179] For more description of the Here's Life Inner City Ministry, see the post from Huffpost, accessed on August 29, 2017, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/author/heres-life-inner-city and the website for Here's Life Inner City, accessed on August 29, 2017, http://www.cru.org/communities/innercity.html.

[180] Carnes, "New Hope," 34.

[181] For more description of the Evangel Christian School, see their website at http://www.evangelchristianschool.org, accessed on August 29, 2017.

[182] Carnes, "New Hope," 34.

[183] Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

[184] Again, the label of "multi-ethnic evangelicalism" is chosen carefully to distinguish it from the evangelicalism that is associated with "conservative, Christianity, whiteness, and a specific political affiliation and economic class." See Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13.

[185] Based on the findings of the International Research Institutes on Values Changes form interview with hundreds of African American church leaders in New York City conducted in 1997, Carnes concludes that 48% of the African American pastors identify themselves as having a conservative approach to theology (mostly inspired by Pentecostalism) while an additional 10% specifically self-identify as evangelical/fundamentalist. Tony Carnes, "African American Church Leaders," in *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, eds. Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 55-56.

Straton and Graham,[186] they did not prioritize white middle- to upper-class New Yorkers as the main target for their outreach. It is certainly possible that Fosdick, Straton, and Graham targeted the white, middle- to upper-class Protestant population of New York City due to being white themselves. Additionally, their historical context was still governed by pre-Civil Rights Act racial segregation. Yet in the historical context of the latter twentieth century, being white did not seem to preclude other pastors from gathering in a multi-ethnic crowd. As previously mentioned, New Life Community Church in Queens was founded in 1987 and became a multi-ethnic evangelical ministry led by white pastors, Pete and Geri Scazzero. Teen Challenge International and Times Square Church both serve as examples of multi-ethnic evangelical ministries founded and led by a white pastor, David Wilkerson, during the latter twentieth century. As early as the 1950s, Wilkerson spent time as an evangelist in New York City, reaching out to young people struggling with substance abuse and kids involved with gangs, the vast majority of whom were of color.[187] This work blossomed into the ministry known today as Teen Challenge International, which includes

---

[186] Given that many of these immigrant evangelicals and multi-ethnic evangelical churches and ministries adhere to more conservative theology and traditional biblical interpretation, it is unlikely they would share the theological views of Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism.

[187] Margalit Fox, "Rev. David Wilkerson Dies at 79; Started Times Square Church," *New York Times*, April 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/29/nyregion/rev-david-wilkerson-79-evangelist-dies-in-crash.html. This work was often dangerous. Before his conversion to Christianity and eventually becoming the director of Teen Challenge International, Nicky Cruz had been the leader of the Mau Mau street gang in New York City. Cruz credited Wilkerson with his conversion, but made clear that Wilkerson's work was not for the faint-hearted in the following quote: "New York in that time was bombarded by gangs, and we were the prime leaders of the gangs. Even Frankenstein and Dracula were afraid to walk in that neighborhood. And he's a skinny preacher! Came from nowhere. There's no way that a type of guy like this can be so strong to stand on his own and to really really really take it. He can take a bullet, he can be killed, but he stood because [he was] obedient to Jesus. Jesus sent him there to bring the message to the gangs. … I almost killed him then because I really was totally full of hate. That was when he told me that Jesus loved me." Nicky Cruz, "Nicky Cruz: David Wilkerson 'Never Lost His Heart'," Interview by Trevor Persaud, *Christianity Today*, April 29, 2011, http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/aprilweb-only/nickycruz.html?start=1. Wilkerson chronicled the conversion of Nicky Cruz in his best-selling autobiographical book *The Cross and the Switchblade* (1962), which in 1970 became a movie starring Pat Boone as David Wilkerson and Erik Estrada as Nicky Cruz.

a network of 200 religion-based residential drug treatment centers throughout the United

States and overseas. After leaving for a time during the 1970s, Wilkerson returned to New

York City in the mid-1980s to start a church in Times Square.[188] During that time, Times

Square was full of drug dealers, prostitutes, porn shops, strip clubs, and the homeless, a

place of poverty, crime, and hopelessness.[189] Wilkerson founded Times Square Church in

1987 to minister directly to this "downtrodden" and multi-racial population.[190] Like the

immigrant and multi-ethnic evangelical ministries of the 1960s through the 1980s in New

York City, the Scazzeros and Wilkerson gathered in a multi-ethnic crowd into their

churches because they did not tailor their ministry to attract the white, middle- to upper-

class.

Because these ministries of the 1960s through the 1980s in New York City did not

target the white, middle- to upper-class population, these two decades after Graham's 1957

Crusade function as an interlude within the historical development of twentieth-century

evangelicalism in New York City. These ministries should only be characterized as

"evangelical" with a qualifier such as "immigrant" or "multi-ethnic." Like the "black

evangelicals" of the 1950s and 1960s, these ministries function as twentieth century

evangelical brands that are alternative to the evangelical brands represented in the figures

of Fosdick, Straton, and Graham. The evangelical brands of these three figures, while

distinct from each other, all share the same impetus to amplify their appeal among the

white, middle- and upper-class as a means of increasing their cultural influence upon the

---

[188] Patrick Pierre, one of the associate pastors at Times Square Church, characterized the group who started attending the worship services as "diverse and energetic" and worship services themselves as "packed out." "Times Square Church—The History," YouTube video produced by Times Square Church, accessed on August 31, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dUvO0FmsDM.
[189] Times Square Church, "Times Square Church—The History."
[190] Times Square Church, "Times Square Church—The History."

grand stage of New York City. As a result of their efforts to appeal to their target

population, the evangelical brands of Fosdick, Straton, and Graham became complicit with

the prevailing racialized social order within their historical context. The final evangelical

leader in New York City to repeat this twentieth-century pattern of allowing his evangelical

brand to reflect the prevailing racialized social order as a result of the drive to increase its

cultural influence was the Rev. Dr. Timothy Keller.

Keller's Evangelical Ministry

In the late 1980s, the Rev. Dr. Timothy Keller arrived on the scene in Manhattan. His

early career gave little indication that he was destined to become one of the major

evangelical figures within New York City during the latter decades of the twentieth century.

After graduating from Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary in 1975, Keller was ordained

in the Presbyterian Church of America (PCA) and became the pastor at West Hopewell

Presbyterian Church located in a small, blue-collar town in rural Virginia.[191] While at West

Hopewell, he completed a Doctor of Ministry degree in 1981 at Westminster Theological

Seminary in Philadelphia.[192] The faculty at Westminster were so impressed with Keller's

work that in 1984 they invited him to teach in the area of practical theology.[193]

---

[191] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 60; Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 20. The PCA should not be confused with the Presbyterian Church of the United States of American (PCUSA). The PCA is the more theologically conservative of the two, as evidenced by their prohibition of same-sex marriage and women serving as ordained pastors.

[192] The same Westminster Theological Seminary that was founded during the early twentieth century by Machen and a group of other professors, all formerly on the faculty at Princeton Theological Seminary, who wanted to start a seminary that would be free from the influence of the liberal, modernist approach to theology and biblical interpretation that they believed had infected Princeton Theological Seminary.

[193] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 60.

During his time at Westminster, Keller came under the influence of a group of urban missiologists led by Harvie Maitland Conn (1933-1999).[194] During the 1970s, Conn spoke out against the white flight of evangelicals from the racially diverse cities of the United States and emphasized the importance of shifting from a rural or suburban to an urban mindset. Conn believed that in spite of white flight to the suburbs, the population would continue to shift toward living in cities. The future of the church and missions then must be connected to cities. Under Conn's leadership in the early 1980s, Westminster Theological Seminary became the first evangelical seminary to offer academic programs with a concentration in urban mission studies from entry-level master's work through doctoral studies. By the time Keller was invited to join the faculty in 1984, Conn had solidified Westminster's institutional prioritization of the city as the site for missions and outreach.

While absorbing Conn's missional prioritizing of cities, Keller also assisted the PCA with the search to identify a pastor who would undertake the work of planting a church on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. Through this work, Keller "caught a vision for Manhattan as a place terribly underserved by the church with gigantic multipliers of influence."[195] Keller was both put off by and drawn to "the arrogance, fierce secularity, diversity, power, and spiritual barrenness" of New York City.[196] Keller viewed New York City as "needy and

---

[194] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 22. After serving as a missionary in Korea for 12 years under the Committee of Foreign Mission of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Conn accepted a faculty position at Westminster Theological Seminary. He began teaching apologetics, but eventually became the first Professor of Missions in the history of Westminster and taught exclusively in the area of missions. Mark R. Gornick, "The Legacy of Harvie M. Conn," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35.4 (2011), 213. Another prominent member of this band of urban missiologists was Roger Greenway, who was also a professor at Westminster during the 1980s and was a former classmate of Harvie Conn at Calvin College. To see the similarities (and differences) between Harvie Conn's and Roger Greenway's approach to urban missions, see Kevin Thomas Baggett, "'Win the City, Win the World:' The Urban Missiology of Roger S. Greenway" (DMin diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013).
[195] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 23.
[196] Keller, "An Evangelical Mission," 32. See also Zylstra, "Life and Times."

strategic," a "culture-forming engine" that has resulted from the sheer density of competition and diversity of points of view.[197] Like Straton and Graham before him, Keller sensed the promise and peril of New York City and ultimately decided that bringing his evangelical ministry onto this high stakes stage was worth the risk.

New York City underwent a couple significant changes that happened to coincide with Keller's arrival in the city during the latter decades of the twentieth century. First and foremost, New York City began to shed its reputation as offering little more than urban pathologies to its inhabitants. By the late 1980s, New York City had a "well-deserved reputation as a snarling, scary place" plagued by violent crimes, drug dealing, and other urban pathologies.[198] Homicides peaked in New York City at 2,245 per year, and a typical day included reports of nine rapes, five murders, 255 robberies, and 194 aggravated assaults.[199] These harsh realities started to shift when Rudy Giuliani took over as the Mayor of New York City in 1994. Giuliani's "broken windows"[200] approach, among other things, caused a dramatic drop in crime during his tenure as mayor. During Giuliani's first three years in office, crime dropped by 7 percent in 1994, 12 percent in 1995, and 16 percent in 1996. By 1996, homicides had dipped below 1,000 for the first time in decades and

---

[197] See Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 22-25. See also Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 58; Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[198] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 20.

[199] Zylstra, "Life and Times."; Annaliese Griffin, "The Climate: New York in 1989," *New York Daily News*, April 8, 2013, http://www.nydailynews.com/services/central-park-five/climate-new-york-1989-article-1.1310861. The Bronx weathered a high percentage of the crime and social problems of this era. From 1985 to 2000, 5,386 Bronx residents were murdered, 5,000 were dying of drug overdoses, and 12,460 were dying of AIDS. See Carnes, "New Hope," 34.

[200] The "broken windows" theory of law enforcement was originally developed by George Kelling and James Q. Wilson. It holds that a few broken windows, if left unchecked, will open the door for larger problems that eventually snowball into urban blight. The idea then is to address the problem while it is small, aggressively enforcing and prosecuting minor crimes in an effort to head off opportunities for more major crimes to occur. See George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *The Atlantic* (March 1982), https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/.

continued to their decline to arrive at 587 in 2002, the year that Giuliani left office.[201] In spite of these dramatic reductions, Giuliani's approach to law enforcement did not make New York City more livable for everyone. Giuliani's "broken windows" approach to law enforcement disproportionately affected racial minority communities and provoked sharp conflicts with such African American political leaders as Al Sharpton.[202] Thus, New York City became more inhabitable for the white populations who benefitted from Giuliani's tactics.

Adding to New York's City renewed appeal to white people was the financial services boom that began in the 1980s and lasted into the 1990s. As shopping became the "great American religion" during this era and middle-class Americans became obsessed with having "the latest, the hottest, the best," the financial services industry in New York City boomed as consumers and businesses across the United States clamored for more access to capital and credit.[203] This boom attracted ambitious, young, and white professionals to come to New York City to pursue careers within the financial services industry and its ancillary supporting services such as law, business consulting, and accounting. Carnes describes this incoming migration as "yuppies" who came to New York

---

[201] See Michael Tomasky, "The Day Everything Changed," *New York*, Sept. 28, 2008, http://nymag.com/anniversary/40th/50652/index4.html. According to the American Society of Criminology, NYC's crime rate dropped sharply between 1996 and 2005, with the number of murders dropping from 379 in 1996 to 43 in 2008; rapes from 482 to 180 in the areas on which Redeemer meets for worship. Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 24. Citing a report compiled by the FBI UCS Annual Crime Reports at http://www.disastercenter.com/crime/nycrime.htm, Zylstra also reports that New York City's homicide rate dropped 85% from 1990 to 2014, transit crime also dropped 87%, and rapes, robberies, and aggravated assaults all plummeted. Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[202] Tomasky, "The Day Everything Changed." Giuliani's "broken windows" approach paved the way for the "Stop and Frisk" policy of his successor, Michael Bloomberg, that was held to be in violation of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment because those people were being stopped and frisked on the basis of their race. See Arthur H. Garrison, "NYPD Stop and Frisk, Perceptions of Criminals, Race and the Meaning of *Terry v Ohio*: A Content Analysis of *Floyd, et al. v City of New York,*" *Rutgers Race and The Law Review* 15 (2014): 65-156.

[203] Gil Troy, *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2005), 3.

City for the ostensible purpose of establishing lucrative careers for themselves.[204]

"Yuppies" is a term that was coined in the early 1980s to refer to "young urban professionals" who were employed in financial centers like New York City.[205] Although somewhat dated, the term "yuppies" is still useful for purposes of this discussion, because this is the exact population for whom Keller crafted his preaching.

In spite of these trends, many evangelicals during the latter two decades of the twentieth century continued to see New York City in terms of its peril instead of its promise. The image of New York City as a wasteland of crime and urban blight devoid of, and even hostile to, evangelical values remained fixed with the perception among many evangelical leaders.[206] Drawn from a Journey Data Center[207] study, the statistic used by many evangelical insiders during that period was that less than 1% of center city Manhattan, meaning the section from 96th street to the Financial District, self-identified as evangelicals.[208] Keller himself operated on the statistic that only 7 percent of the residents of Manhattan were Protestant Church goers during the 1980s.[209] Consistent with previous generations, late-twentieth century evangelicals were skeptical about the possibility of

---

[204] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 11.

[205] D. Rutherford, "yuppie, yuppy," *Routledge Dictionary of Economics*, 3rd Edition (London: Routledge 2013), http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/routsobk/yuppie_yuppy/0?institutionId=1119.

[206] Bartholomew interviewed people who commented that during the 1980s and 1990s the religious landscape of New York City was "decidedly non-evangelical." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 54.

[207] *A Journey Through NYC Religions* started on July 9, 2010 as a National Geographic-like web magazine on religion in New York City. *A Journey Through NYC Religions* is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and also runs the Journey Data Center, Journey Consulting and Design, and Journey Worships. See *Journey Through NYC Religions*, accessed on August 25, 2017, http://www.nycreligion.info/about/. Tony Carnes, co-editor of *New York Glory: Religions in the City* (2001) and *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries* (2004), is listed as the Editor and Publisher of *A Journey Through NYC Religions*.

[208] Terry Mattingly, "After 9-11, Evangelicals Heart New York: A Faith-Shaped Trend That Has Quietly Emerged in the Big Apple in the Decades Since the Twin Towers Fell," *A Journey Through NYC Religions*, September 21, 2011, http://www.nycreligion.info/911-evangelicals-heart-york/. See also Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[209] Keller, "An Evangelical Mission," 31. Keller did not provide a cite as to the source of the statistic that informed this perception.

living a godly life within the boundaries of the city and had largely abandoned it. The few

evangelicals who remained or came to the city were found in parachurch missional

agencies, such as Campus Crusade for Christ or Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, there for

the express purpose of being a "witness for the gospel."[210]

In spite of the fixed evangelical perception of the peril of New York City, two

significant ministries capitalized on the influx of young urban professionals during the

1980s and 1990s. In the mid-1980s, Dave and Diane Balch pioneered Campus Crusade for

Christ's Executive Ministries, a ministry focusing on Manhattan's professional community

that quickly boasted numbers into the hundreds. Beginning in 1986, the DeMoss House, a

century old landmark mansion bought by the DeMoss Foundation to host Bible studies for

Manhattan professionals, developed a booming ministry among the high end of the city's

occupational spectrum, namely bankers, accountants, models, media executives,

advertising executives, and lawyers.[211] Through the work of these two ministries, scores of

young urban professionals in New York City came to faith and needed a church.[212]

Finding a suitable church for these urban professionals proved to be a challenge.

Bartholomew recounts how the Balches expressed their frustration over not being able to

funnel these Manhattan professionals into a church appropriate for them.[213] While they

recognized that there were "Bible-preaching churches" in New York City at that time, one of

which was Calvary Baptist Church where Straton had served six decades earlier, often the

cultural style of these churches left these young urban professionals uncomfortable.[214] Glen

---

[210] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 55.
[211] Peter Donald, "Sermons and Soda Water: A Rich Philadelphia Widow Wants to Save New York Society," *New York Magazine*, November 7, 1988, 57.
[212] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 22.
[213] See Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 55-62.
[214] One such professional commented, "I know these people love Jesus, and that they are teaching the Bible,

Klienkenect, who worked with Campus Crusade's inner-city ministry "Here's Life New York City," indicated that "New York needed a new wine skin," a different kind of evangelical church capable of reaching an audience not reached by the established churches of the city.[215]

Keller arrived on the stage in Manhattan at just the right time to take on this challenge. Partnering with these ministries, Keller worked with a core group of these urban professionals starting in February of 1989. He wanted to learn more about their cultural setting and their expectations for the church. Keller peppered them with questions: "What are New Yorkers like? What kind of music do they like? Do they like formal worship or free-style? What is the religious background of the target audience? Where are these people from? Are they native New Yorkers? How can we reach Jews? Homosexuals? Artists?"[216] He also asked them "What would be a New Yorker's worst disaster?" and "What kind of church would a New Yorker want to attend?"[217] These were semi-closed sessions of approximately 15 people, but not always the same group. Through these meetings, Keller came to understand these urban professionals as driven by an ambition, desire, and status that had prompted them to chase after false dreams, develop false desires, and engage in destructive behavior out of sync with God's intention for the world. Keller isolated the impetus for this unholy progression in their failure to worship God instead of the individual self.[218] Keller then gathered in a leadership team who would help him develop an evangelical church

---

but I just don't belong here; I don't fit," as quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 56.
[215] As quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 62.
[216] See Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 60-61.
[217] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 22.
[218] See Javier Viera, "Sexual Ethics and the Church: Overcoming the Conflict of Traditions," (STM Thesis, Yale University, 1998), 19-20.

tailored to attract these young, white, urban professionals who had come to New York City to "make it" in their careers.

Developing an evangelical church that would attract these urban professionals turned out to be tricky. Through the efforts of such pastors as Jerry Falwell and opportunistic Republican political strategists, by the 1980s white middle- to upper-class evangelicals were the backbone of the New Christian Right. Although ostensibly a coalition for voters who wanted to promote certain political platforms, such as anti-abortion, the preservation of the traditional family unit, and resistance to "Big Government," the New Christian Right delivered evangelicals as a reliable voting bloc for the Republican Party.[219] The entanglement of evangelicalism with the Republican Party created a tension for Keller and his leadership team. Any overt alignment of this new church with evangelicalism would put it at odds with the more socially progressive, racially diverse, and Democrat-leaning culture of New York City that could alienate the young urban professionals they hoped to attract. Yet they did indeed want to attract these young urban professionals to a church community immersed in traditional evangelical views. They sidestepped this conundrum by settling on the name "Redeemer Presbyterian Church." First, it did not have the word "evangelical" in the title and would therefore not risk a negative connotation in the target group. Second, they thought these young urban professionals would prefer to have the denominational and historical link for this church community made explicit. Finally, they also considered the name appropriate as a reminder of the church's purpose in the city: "to redeem that which is lost."[220]

---

[219] Balmer, *Making of Evangelicalism,* 75; Williams, *God's Own Party*, 3; Schäfer, *Countercultural Conservatives,* 4.
[220] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 61.

These deliberative efforts of Keller and his leadership team bore fast fruit. By the end of 1989, 250 showed up at Redeemer's worship services, and by the next fall the number of attendees rose to 600. Redeemer Presbyterian Church eventually swelled to an average attendance of approximately 3,000 by the year 2000 and had approximately 5,000 each Sunday by the time Keller retired from the ministry in 2017.[221] Research further shows that Keller had successfully built a church that attracted young urban professionals. A 1995 ethnographic analysis conducted by Tuck Bartholomew found that Redeemer was predominantly comprised of single adults (73.1%) in their 20s (45.8%) and 30s (31.2%).[222] They were also highly educated. Almost all (97.1%) of the worship attendees at Redeemer Presbyterian Church had pursued at least some college education, and just under half (42%) had not only completed their bachelor's degree, but also had taken up graduate studies.[223] Only 16.5% of the people attending Redeemer indicated having been born in New York City and barely one-third had lived in the city for more than 11 years. 51.7% of respondents identified their occupation as professional, working in the fields of education, medicine, law, advertising, finance, and banking, and another 19.6% as students.[224] Based on this data, the efforts of Keller and his leadership team had been successful in gathering in the young urban professional population that had come to New York City to "make it" in their careers.

---

[221] The sources for these numbers are at Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 24 and Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 48. See also Zylstra, "Life and Times," in which she indicates that New York evangelical insiders did not give Keller much of a chance of lasting more than 5 years.

[222] Bartholomew's demographic information was gathered primarily from a survey conducted on April 16, 1995 right after people had attended a Redeemer worship service. The survey included 593 respondents. Although the survey provides the backbone of his demographic information, Bartholomew supplemented these findings with interviews and field observations. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 74.

[223] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 78.

[224] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 79.

The racial, religious, and socio-economic characteristics among the attendees of

Redeemer's worship reveals that Keller and his leadership team were adept at attracting

certain kinds of young urban professionals. During the mid- to late- 1990s, the racial

composition was a majority of white (58.2%) and one-third Asian (34.9%), with Blacks

(2.5%), Latinx (2.5%), and others (1.3%) not even rising to 7% of those attending the

worship.[225] In 2012, Keller reported that Redeemer is "about forty-five percent Anglo,

about forty-five percent Asian, and about ten percent Black or Hispanic," which indicates

that the white and Asian populations consistently remained the largest racial groups at

Redeemer's worship services during the 1990s and into the 2000s.[226] Additionally, 67.8%

of the worship attendees indicated they had been raised going to Protestant worship

services, and 82.1% indicated they had attended Protestant worship services in the past 10

years.[227] In line with this data, Carnes has noted that many of the young urban

professionals who came to Redeemer's worship services were evangelicals who discovered

Redeemer was devoted to making the faith of their upbringing remain appealing to them

while living and pursuing their careers in New York City.[228] Finally, more than two-thirds

(70%) of the worship attendees reported an annual income of higher than $25,000, with

---

[225] Even though Redeemer was predominately white, its racial composition was more diverse than the broader evangelical set of religious communities across the United States. Emerson and Smith conducted a study in the late 1990s that indicated almost 90% of all Americans who call themselves evangelicals are white. See Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 3.

[226] Tim Keller, "Tim Keller on Churches and Race," Video Interview, posted by Big Think, accessed April 11, 2017, http://bigthink.com/videos/tim-keller-on-churches-and-race.

[227] Respondents also identified as being raised in other religious traditions (Catholic 18.4%, Jewish 1.7%, other 1.2%) and as having attended worship services in other religious traditions over the past 10 years (Catholic 6.1%, Jewish 0.2%, other 1.4%). Some indicated they had not been raised in any religious tradition (11%) and had not attended any worship services in the past 10 years (10.2%). Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 79.

[228] Carnes, "Religions in the City," 11. Carnes also suggests that the same dynamic is true for Jewish people who came to New York City in response to the financial services boom. He indicates that B'nai Jeshurun is a "hot synagogue" about which they would have heard. Carnes, "Religions in the City," 11.

almost one-third of them (31%) indicating an annual income of higher than $50,000.[229] Thus, the young urban professionals who attended Redeemer's worship services were largely middle- to upper-class.[230] Thus, the majority of people attending Redeemer's worship services were not only young urban professionals, they were also mostly white, middle- to upper-class, and evangelical.

The success in attracting these young urban professionals in such high numbers far exceeded the expectations of the dozen or so people at the planning session Bible studies led by Keller in 1989. Given the persistent perception among evangelicals during the latter twentieth century of New York City as a place of peril, Keller had achieved what many thought could not be done. Sarah Zylstra reflects a narrative that developed in wider evangelical circles regarding Keller's ministry in New York City: "Amid the crack cocaine and handguns, among Wall Street investors and liberal intellectuals, he preached a conservative theology replete with complementarianism, five-point Calvinism, and hell. And 15 years later, *Christianity Today* was calling Redeemer 'one of Manhattan's most vital congregations'."[231] Much as it had begun in the early decades of the twentieth century, evangelicalism in New York City closed out the final decades of the twentieth century with a triumphal narrative. The success of the ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church to these white young urban professionals in New York City offered evangelicals an opportunity for enhanced cultural influence. In this city of cities that could multiply their

---

[229] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 78.
[230] At that time, these young urban professionals at Redeemer's worship services were also slightly more affluent than the general population of evangelicals in the United States, with two-thirds reporting an annual income of more than $30,000 and just over half (56%) reporting an annual income of between $30,000 and $79,000. Christian Smith, *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998), 78.
[231] Zylstra, "Life and Times."

cultural influence across the entire country, Keller's ministry reacquainted evangelicals with the promise of New York City.

Keller's ministry in New York City then comprised the final iteration of a pattern repeated throughout twentieth-century evangelicalism in New York City. Like Fosdick, Straton, and Graham before him, Keller sought to amass under his evangelical brand a following of the white, middle- to upper-class population in New York City who were available to him, namely young urban professionals. As the final evangelical figure in this recurring twentieth-century pattern in New York City, Keller's ministry then displayed the interplay between the aspiration for greater cultural influence and the capitulation to the prevailing racialized social order. The ways in which Keller's ministry displayed this interplay are best understood within the context of the most central aspect of his ministry in New York City: his preaching.

CHAPTER THREE:

KELLER'S PREACHING TO YOUNG URBAN PROFESSIONALS

Through a content analysis of his sermons, Keller's ministry can be identified as the final iteration of a recurring twentieth-century pattern in which the desire for increased cultural influence caused the leader's evangelical brand to become conflated with the prevailing racialized social order. Preaching was Keller's primary mode of ministry within New York City. Unlike other pastors in New York City during the 1980s and 1990s who took a more "hands on" approach to social engagement on matters of racial and socio-economic injustice,[1] Keller did not engage in political advocacy or social activism.[2] Instead, Keller sought to capture the imagination of his base of young urban professionals with his sermons in such a way that they would in turn live out his evangelical message.[3] Through these young urban professionals, Keller hoped to be able to exert maximal influence for his evangelical brand in New York City and, ultimately, across the whole of the United States. Keller's ministry within New York City then finds its place as the final iteration of a recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism that had already been played

---

[1] Three examples of pastors who started ministries at the same time as Keller and took a more "hands on" approach to combatting racial and socio-economic injustice are A.R. Bernard of the Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, David Wilkerson of Times Square Church in Manhattan, and Pete Scazzero of New Life Fellowship in Queens. Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

[2] This does not mean that Redeemer Presbyterian Church did not engage in "hands on" ministries that addressed racial or socio-economic injustice. Hope for New York was formed as a separate 501(c)(3) organization under the Redeemer umbrella to bring about "a New York City in which all people experience spiritual, social, and economic flourishing through the demonstration of Christ's love." Hope for New York website at https://www.hfny.org/about/, accessed on September 11, 2017.

[3] Keller turned out to be gifted not only at capturing the imagination of the young urban professionals who attended Redeemer's worship services, but also Redeemer's initial leadership team. One elder commented, "Tim had the vision, and we followed." Bartholomew, *Reviving Orthodoxy*, 53. That vision is articulated in the following statement: ""The Vision of Redeemer is to build a great city for all people through a Gospel movement that brings personal conversion, community formation, social justice, and cultural renewal to New York City and, through New York City, to the world." S62, Tim Keller, "The Gospel" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 25, 2005) MP3 Audio.

out in the earlier ministries of Fosdick, Straton, and Graham in New York City. The following content analysis in this chapter unveils Keller's evangelical brand as the last expression of the first defining characteristic within twentieth-century evangelicalism, namely the drive to increase the cultural influence for his evangelical brand. The racial analysis of Keller's preaching that reveals the second defining characteristic of twentieth-century evangelicalism, namely the complicity of Keller's evangelical brand with the prevailing racialized social order, occurs primarily in chapter 4. Nevertheless, the content analysis in this chapter at times does indicate the ways in which Keller's evangelical brand was not only crafted to appeal to young urban professionals, but also reflects the racialized social order of the late twentieth-century that assigned social privileges to whites over other races.

The Key To Cultural Influence: Young Urban Professionals

The single most important factor influencing Keller's evangelical message was that he tailored his sermons for an audience of young urban professionals who had come to New York City to "make it."[4] Keller made a lot of references that would indicate he believed it was important both for his listeners to see themselves as "New Yorkers" and for his listeners to perceive of Keller as an authentic "New Yorker." While preaching, Keller communicated what he thought was a challenging concept to his listeners. He said, "all of you didn't understand what I just said," and then playfully admonished them not to "sit there like New Yorkers and say yeah, yeah, yeah" as if they had understood his point.

---

[4] Before launching the ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Keller studied a core group of these young urban professionals by asking them a series of questions to gain a clearer understanding of who they were and what they were about. He then proceeded to develop the vision for the ministry and his preaching on the basis of what he learned. See Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 60-61.

Uproarious laughter from the audience can be heard following Keller's quip. Keller

proceeded to tell his listeners that "a lot of you are younger brother types," meaning that

they wanted to leave their families and find their fame and fortune on their own. Keller

asked, "where do younger brothers go?" He then answered his own question, saying "[t]hey

go to New York! [The younger brother] left Ohio, he left Alabama, and he went to New

York." This statement again prompted laughter from the audience.[5] This playfulness

between Keller and his listeners shows they stood on common ground. They had both left

the humdrum of wherever they had come from to go to New York City to "make it." They

were all, Keller included, trying to fit in as "real" New Yorkers.

Fitting in as a New Yorker was about more than overcoming anxiety over standing

out like a sore thumb. Keller identified a moral superiority complex as the source of failing

to embrace becoming a "New Yorker." "So many Christians have come to New York City

from nice, middle class families and have a feeling of moral superiority over the people

living here." Keller admonished them to drop their "Phariseeism" and recognize that they

had been saved by "God's Gospel of grace" so that they would be able to reach out with

God's love to the people of New York City.[6] In addition to moral superiority, Keller

identified a sense of transience about living in New York City as an inhibitor to becoming a

"New Yorker." In 2000, an ethnographic study determined that almost half of Redeemer's

worship attendees had lived in New York City for no more than five years, and just over

---

[5] S60, Tim Keller, "The Prodigal Sons" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 2, 2005), MP3 Audio.

[6] S25, Tim Keller, "Sin as Self-Righteousness" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, February 25, 1996), MP3 Audio. In addition to calling out morally superior young urban professionals, it is also possible that Keller's preaching was in reaction to the fixed perception among evangelicals during the latter twentieth century that New York City was a place of great spiritual peril, which is more fully described in the final section of chapter two.

40% reported that they expected to leave New York City within five years.[7] In a sermon

encouraging his listeners to give to Redeemer's capital campaign, Keller voiced these

transient young urban professionals' objection as "but I'm not even going to be here in a

year, why would I give to this?" Keller told them to "pay it forward" so that the next person

who moves to New York City could benefit from the ministry at Redeemer, "but better yet,

give [to the capital campaign] and stick around!"[8] Keller wanted his listeners to forgo a

sense of moral superiority and transience so that they could embrace, with him, becoming

New Yorkers.

By encouraging these migratory young urban professionals to think of themselves

as New Yorkers, Keller wanted them to become more invested in New York City. "Why are

you here? Why did you come to New York City? You're professionals. Why are you here?"

Keller asked during one sermon, and then proceeded to answer his own question: "I can tell

you why you're here.... You're here so you can say you got a job in New York and it helps

your resume. You're here to make money. You're here to make it in your career, to enjoy

the cultural opportunities. You're here to incorporate the coolness of living in New York

City into your personality."[9] Keller almost lashed out at his listeners as he goes on to say

they are in New York City not to serve but to "plunder the city."[10] Bartholomew describes

the challenge that faced Keller as needing to move these young urban professionals from a

---

[7] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," Table 4.6, Table 4.7, 80-81.

[8] S68, Tim Keller, "The Gospel and Your Wealth" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, November 6, 2005), MP3 Audio.

[9] S63, Tim Keller, "The City" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 2, 2005), MP3 Audio. Carnes has noted that during the 1990s, which he names "the era of *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and *Sex and the City*," hundreds of thousands of young professionals migrated to New York City to partake of the boom in financial services, culture, and urban lifestyle epitomized by television programs during this era. Carnes, "New Hope," 36.

[10] S63, Keller, "The City."

pragmatic use of New York City for their own purposes to a commitment to serve the city "as sons and daughters of the heavenly Father."[11]

Keller not only wanted these young urban professionals to become invested in New York City, he wanted them to become invested in the community at Redeemer Presbyterian Church. The purpose of salvation, Keller explained, was to create a "new human community." Animated by the concept, Keller raised his voice a notch to rail that "[y]ou can't just come to church, even every week, and just get information and inspiration and apart from that you don't submit yourself to the community. That's not enough." When his listeners failed to submit to the community, Keller indicated they were frustrating the purposes of God and would not be able to experience "God's renovating power to work in your life."[12] In another sermon, Keller noted that some of his listeners might be capable and fortunate enough to actualize their career ambitions, but that would be "the worst thing" for them. If the desire of their hearts was not ultimately for God, then "achieving what their hearts desired would destroy them." Keller offered submission to the Redeemer community as a means of escaping that downward cycle of spiritual detriment.[13] Such personal and pointed appeals demonstrated Keller's zeal to encourage the young urban professionals in his audience to think of themselves as New Yorkers and become more invested in the city and in Redeemer's ministry for the city.

Part of Keller's frustration resulted from the potential he saw in these young urban professionals. In line with Fosdick, Straton, and Graham, Keller came to New York City to

---

[11] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 160-161.

[12] S64, Tim Keller, "Community (2005)" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 9, 2005), MP3 Audio.

[13] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, February 11, 1996), MP3 Audio.

establish a beachhead for his evangelical brand.[14] From this beachhead, Keller's evangelical

message would be able to exert cultural influence not only in New York City, but through

New York City across the entire United States. Keller was operating on the idea that "as the

city goes, so goes the culture. Cultural trends tend to be generated in the city and flow

outward to the rest of society."[15] With its position as a, if not *the*, center of commerce and

culture in the United States, New York City held greater promise than other cities to

influence cultural trends. Keller demonstrated his awareness of these stakes when he

commented that after living in New York City for a number of years, "I am continually

astonished at how the people I live with and know affect what everyone else in the country

sees on the screen, in print, in art, and in business."[16] Keller considered the young urban

professionals who showed up to listen to his preaching[17] to hold jobs that gave them access

to that kind of across-the-country cultural pull, which made them integral to making the

beachhead for his evangelical brand as influential as possible.

    In spite of his frustrations with their lack of investment in New York City and

Redeemer Presbyterian Church, Keller used carrot as much as stick to coax these young

urban professionals to join this evangelical beachhead. He often cast a vision of the positive

impact and presence he believed these young urban professionals were capable of having

---

[14] In an interview with Stafford, Keller described Redeemer's role within evangelicalism this way: "We have a beachhead. A beachhead means we have a pretty significant, balanced ministry from which you can get a lot of things done … I feel there is a way of doing ministry with this particular balance that other people can do, and right now I feel other people aren't doing it. How can we leave behind a generation of people who know how to do this—and will do it?" Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 25.

[15] Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," 38.

[16] Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," 38.

[17] Keller's sermons were reported time and time again as the reason for coming to the worship at Redeemer. One worshipper reported a fairly representative view that "the teaching is the best, encouraging, practical, and challenging … and the sermons are the hook that makes you stay." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 126.

in New York City. If they came to the city "to make money…to make it in your career, to enjoy the cultural opportunities, to incorporate the coolness of living in New York City into your personality," then Keller warned that New York City "is gonna get you." The antidote to this, according to Keller, was to come to New York City not to serve themselves, but to serve the city. Keller then cited Proverbs 11:10, "When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices." This passage meant that "[t]here's a group of people. When the whole city sees them becoming prominent, the city rejoices. The whole city wants them to succeed because they are so crucial to creating value for the city life… That's the kind of people God calls us to be in Jesus." Keller wanted his listeners to take up the call to be the "righteous" who would make New York City rejoice. If they served the city in accordance with his evangelical message, Keller promised these young urban professionals that they had the opportunity to become that group of people whom the whole city would want to succeed. They could make themselves crucial to creating value for everyone living in the city. They could be doing such good service for others that if they left, the city would "have to raise taxes enormously."[18]

This positive vision was not all that Keller used to entice young urban professionals to contribute to an evangelical beachhead. Keller's theology of the city and of the work of these young urban professionals within New York City was also crafted to help his listeners actualize their enormous potential for significant evangelical cultural influence.

Spiritualizing the City and the Work of Young Urban Professionals

The theology of the city contained in Keller's evangelical message made clear how much influence he believed these young urban professionals could have both within and

---

[18] S63, Keller, "The City."

beyond the borders of New York City. In his sermons, Keller took a pro-city stance, arguing that "the Bible has a more positive view of cities than modern Americans."[19] Citing such passages as Genesis 1, 2 and 11, Hebrews 11, and Revelation 21, Keller noted how cities factored heavily into God's plan of redemption.[20] Keller often pushed against the idea that urban centers were inferior to the suburbs or rural parts of the country, arguing that "the city is God's invention and design, not just some sociological phenomenon or invention of humankind"[21] and referring to God as a "city-builder."[22] Throughout human history, according to Keller, cities had always provided a greater number and diversity of human connections and therefore fostered "creativity and innovation." Keller also pointed out that cities have been the places that set the trends in culture, frequently asserting that "as the cites go, so goes the society."[23] Since Keller considered New York City to be the cultural capital of the world, the center of finance, education, commerce, sport, arts, and media, the cultural influence of New York City was even greater than in other cities.[24] As a significant cultural capital, New York City was a city of cities, setting the agenda for the trends of other cities. Viera found that Keller's pro-city theology at Redeemer culminated in the goal to ignite a gospel movement that changes New York City in every dimension—spiritually, socially, culturally—and, by changing New York City, to effect change across the whole

---

[19] Given that many of the young urban professionals were also displaced evangelicals from other parts of the United States, they most likely had a particularly negative view of cities in keeping with the general sentiments of evangelicals in the late 1980s and 1990s. For a more detailed discussion of the disfavor for cities among most white populations, and the particular antipathy for cities among evangelicals, in the United States, see Mulder and Smith, "Subdivided By Faith?", 415-434.

[20] Bartholomew reports that "Keller articulates a vision of God's plan that not only includes the city but that also culminates in the full redemption of the city." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 160.

[21] Tim Keller, "Redeemer: The Importance of the City," as quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 160.

[22] S13, Tim Keller, "The Problem of the City" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, November 7, 1993), MP3 Audio.

[23] Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," 38.

[24] Viera, "Sexual Ethics," 19.

world.[25] For Keller, changing New York City would be similar to tipping the first domino in a series of changes that would tumble across the world.

Keller's positive view of New York City contrasted not only the generally negative view of cities held by evangelicals of the late twentieth century, but also the negative view of New York City held by Straton during the early twentieth century. Straton saw New York City as in the throes of a "jazz spirit" that supplanted Christian ideals with an idolatrous glorification of power and pleasure.[26] Unless the people of New York City turned from these "forces of sin and godlessness," this city would end up suffering the cataclysmic social breakdown that had occurred in Sodom and Gomorrah. The only remedy was for New York City to be either "Americanized" or "Christianized" before it slumped toward being "Europeanized."[27] While a generation later, Graham's rebranded evangelicalism softened Straton's opposition to the consumer commercialism that undergirded U.S. society in general, Keller's pro-city theology distanced his evangelical brand from Straton's even more. Keller's pro-city theology affirmed that New York City, as the city of cities in the United States, was a God-ordained means of promoting cultural renewal for both the people of New York City and for the whole of the United States. New York City was not the consequence of human mistake, but rather the outworking of God's grace to provide humanity with an opportunity for greater creativity and innovation. According to Keller's pro-city theology, New York City did not need to be "Christianized" so much as the young urban professionals living in New York City needed to recognize the incredible potential for wide-ranging cultural influence New York City offered them. Whereas both Straton and

---

[25] Viera, "Sexual Ethics," 18.
[26] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75.
[27] Todd, "New York, the New Babylon?", 75.

Keller recognized the strategic significance of New York City in gaining cultural influence

for their evangelical brands, Straton tended to view the city as a means to the end of

gaining that cultural influence. Keller, on the other hand, espoused an evangelical message

that assigned godliness to New York City itself, even apart from its potential to magnify the

cultural influence of his evangelical brand.

Following the elevation of the godliness of cities and the emphasis on their

importance in influencing culture, Keller's theology of the city moved on to a call to action.

Naming Jeremiah 29:4-7[28] as the "fundamental encapsulation of their vision statement,"

Keller interpreted this passage as God commanding evangelical Christians "to move in with

the Babylonians [meaning New York City's indigenous population] in order to influence the

city."[29] He elaborated by preaching that

> Jeremiah 29 is an amazing passage, because God says to the Israelites [when] they
> are off in this wicked, terrible place called Babylon, "Identify with the prosperity of
> that city." He does not say, "Oh, go into the streets and preach to the city, hand out
> tracts in the city and then get out." He says, "Settle down." He says, "Build houses,
> have children, identify with the city, identify with the people of the city, identify
> with the welfare of the city, weave yourselves into the city so that you weave
> wholeness and health in the city. [30]

---

[28] "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to
Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and
daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and
daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which
I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." Jer. 29:4-7
NIV.

[29] Although Keller is using Jeremiah 29:4-7 to cast a vision for the young urban professionals who were
listening to his sermons, he also takes it to mean that more Christians in general should live in cities. Keller,
"A New Kind of Urban Christian," 38. In fact, Keller pushed for evangelicals to move out of the suburbs and
into New York City during his time at Redeemer. Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 25. Keller's push seemed
to gain some traction as white evangelicals developed a significantly more positive view of cities and were
more open to migrating back into city life. Tony Carnes, "The Making of the Postsecular City: the Manhattan
Evangelicals, part 1," *A Journey Through NYC Religions*, December 1, 2010,
http://www.nycreligion.info/making-postsecular-city-manhattan-evangelicals-part-1/.

[30] S13, Keller, "The Problem of the City."

Just as God wanted the Israelites to "build houses," "settle down," and "increase in number" in Babylon, so God wanted evangelical Christians to become part of the culture in New York City and "increase in number" there. While encouraging them to keep their "distinct" beliefs and practices "though they will be offensive," Keller urged these young urban professionals to always seek the peace and prosperity of New York City. "[W]e [evangelical Christians] are supposed to come into New York City and not take over the city, but simply live the life of Jesus, the way of the cross, which is my life for you, which is the way of service."[31] This would in turn prompt the people of New York City, who were benefitting from the self-sacrificial service of the young urban professionals, to ask "what do you believe that makes you live like this?"[32] Not only would this evangelical presence in New York City not be coercive, if these young urban professionals put Keller's evangelical message into practice, they would become a group of people who were winsome to their fellow New Yorkers.

However, the pro-city theology of the city that Keller used to inspire these young urban professionals contained some hard edges. First, by likening these young urban professionals coming into New York City to the Israelites who came into Babylon, Keller assigned them exile status. Even while encouraging these young urban professionals to settle down in New York City, Keller reminded them that were not really New Yorkers. Aligning the young urban professionals with the Israelite exiles also inhibited them from becoming more invested in New York City. William Myatt comments that Keller presented New York City both as a mystical path toward greater spiritual renewal for the young urban professionals who choose to live there and objectified New York City and the people of

---

[31] S63, Keller, "The City."
[32] S63, Keller, "The City."

color living there as a means to the spiritual end of these mostly white and evangelical young urban professionals who had been migrating from the suburbs into New York City. Although Myatt discerns Keller's theology of the city from Keller's book *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (2012) and not directly from his sermons, Myatt's appraisal confirms that much of Keller's theology of the city in *Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry* reflected the same approach that appears in his sermons. For instance, Myatt notes that the primary episode Keller used to construct his theology of the city was the charge given to the Israelites in the Babylonian exile in Jeremiah 29, the same passage Keller featured in his preaching.[33] Because Keller's theology of the city did not dislodge these young urban professionals as exiles in New York City, seeking the peace and prosperity of the city functioned both tacitly as a means of improving their individual spiritual well-being and overtly as a call for them to engage in cultural renewal.

The second hard edge to Keller's theology of the city is that Keller glossed over the reality that the full actualization of an evangelical vision for cultural renewal would mean jarring changes and restrictions on sexual relationships and gender roles for the people of New York City. In his sermons, Keller did not shy away from defining marriage as "a relationship between one man and one woman."[34] Nor was Keller bashful about preaching on the passages that indicate that the male is "the head of the house" and that women needed to submit to this for their marriages to work well.[35] Keller's governing

---

[33] See William Myatt, "God in Gotham: Tim Keller's Theology of the City," *Missiology: An International Review* 44.2 (2016), 190.

[34] S12, Tim Keller, "Sex—The Biblical Guidelines" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 1, 1993), MP3 Audio.

[35] S38, Tim Keller, "Submit To One Another" (sermon), *Ephesians: God's New Society* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, August 16, 1998), MP3 Audio.

denomination, the PCA, held to a doctrinal position that the family, consisting of a man and a woman joined in marriage and raising their children, was God's vision for how human beings were supposed to be in sexual relationship, procreate, and raise godly children. Viera notes that under the logic of this doctrinal position, New York City would change for the better when a strong, "healthy" family unit took root and revealed the inability of "alternative lifestyles" to carry out the vision of God's goodness for the world.[36] Keller did not spell this out in his sermons, but he did supply the building blocks for this doctrinal position by including the mandates of husband headship and heterosexual marriage in his preaching.[37] At times Keller even exhibited a defensiveness in his sermons, commenting that people think his evangelical vision for cultural renewal means some kind of "sinister takeover."[38] This defensiveness was also on display in an interview Keller gave to Stafford, in which he stressed his vision for cultural renewal was one of "cultural presence" that "enhances the flavor but doesn't take over."[39] Yet for all his attempts to nuance the cultural renewal features of his pro-city theology, Keller glossed over providing a clear explanation for how living "the way of the cross" would allow his listeners to both maintain his evangelical vision for sexual relationships and gender roles while seeking the peace and prosperity of New Yorkers who reject that same evangelical vision. To prevent this hard

---

[36] Viera, "Sexual Ethics," 27.

[37] At times, Keller tried to distance his evangelical message from these doctrinal positions, particularly on gender. Keller preached that the Bible indicates there are "gender differences," but not "gender rigidity" or "gender absolutism." Yet in his preaching Keller does not seem to offer a definition for "gender differences" versus "gender rigidity" or "gender absolutism" and therefore does little to advance a position that is substantively different than the doctrinal stance of the PCA. See S45, Tim Keller, "God Our Lover" (sermon), *Four Ways To Live, Four Ways To Love* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 24, 2000), MP3 Audio.

[38] S67, Tim Keller, "Culture" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 30, 2005) MP3 Audio.

[39] Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 25.

edge from alienating these young urban professionals, Keller spent much more time in his sermons wooing them with the positive impact they could have upon the broader culture through self-sacrificial service to New York City.[40]

Another way Keller wooed young urban professionals to his pro-city theology was by coupling it with a corresponding pro-work theology. In one of his sermons, Keller addressed "business people who have heard from their ministers that they [the ministers] are serving the Lord while you [the business people] are out there spending your life making money so [you can] give us enough of it so we can serve the Lord, because you are not."[41] Keller reassured his young urban professional listeners that that theology was rubbish and then promptly supplied them with a theology of work that assigned a high level of spiritual significance to what these young urban professionals did for a living.[42] The "Spirit of God is not just [on] a preacher, but also an investment banker and artist and

---

[40] Keller also hid this hard edge from his audience of young urban professionals by making themes of God's love and acceptance central in his preaching. Bartholomew notes that because of the centrality of these themes within Keller's preaching, the worship attendees whom he interviewed had a sense that Redeemer "is full of broken people" and "is an environment of understanding" for people who are struggling with pain and brokenness. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 138.

[41] Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," 39. See also Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 152.

[42] Although operating in New York City caused Keller to apply his theology of work innovatively so it would fit his young urban professional audience, assigning spiritual significance to everyday jobs was not unique to Keller. Other megachurch pastors of the latter decades of the twentieth century were espousing a similar theology of work. Justin Wilford has noted that Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church since 1980 and author of the best-selling books *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*, seamlessly incorporated everyday places into larger evangelical narratives. Warren essentially instilled these everyday practices with deep religious themes and thereby infused them with potent religious meanings. Justin Wilford, *Sacred Subdivisions: The Postsuburban Transformation of American Evangelicalism* (New York: New York University Press 2012), 4. Bethany Moreton also traces this embedded spiritualization of the mundane within the rise of the Wal-Mart empire. Walton somehow had to convince the underconsuming Ozark population to buy in abundance. He realized that the evangelical faith of these Ozarks inoculated them against marketing ploys that stoked desire, so Walton employed a different marketing strategy. Although hardly an ardent evangelical believer himself, Walton promoted the Wal-Mart shopping experience as one "imbued with family values." He basically engineered Wal-Mart to foster an environment in which managers, employees, and customers all partook of a service ethos that honored each of them as Christian servants. See Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009), 86-89. In other words, Walton infused the Wal-Mart shopping experience with transformational spiritual themes in much the same way (although for a much different purpose) that Rick Warren and Tim Keller would do a generation later.

gardener. In fact, the preacher's job is limited, but other cultural activities will continue indefinitely." By this, Keller meant that in the Eschaton people would no longer need preaching to know who Jesus was, but the work of the investment banker, artist, gardener and others was cultural activity that would continue indefinitely in the world to come. Keller flatly stated that "the purpose of saving souls is to renew creation … this is what redemption is all about," thereby encouraging his young urban professional listeners to see their work as part of the cultural activity that was meant to renew the culture within New York City.[43] In an article in *Christianity Today*, Keller indicated he wanted these young urban professionals to "integrate their faith with their work" in such a way that their understanding of his evangelical message would allow them to work in "an excellent but distinctive manner" that would contribute to cultural renewal.[44]

By blurring the line between the sacred and the profane, Keller essentially elevated the secular work of young urban professionals to the level of missionary endeavor.[45] Keller did not want these young urban professionals to create an evangelical subculture within New York City. Instead, Keller's theology of work prodded them to "move out into the

[43] S67, Keller, "Culture."
[44] Keller, "A New Kind of Urban Christian," 39. See also Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 152.
[45] Again, the similarities between Keller and Warren are apparent. Through his sermons, Warren morphed the office cubicle, and the work done therein, from mundane to holy by including them within larger evangelical narratives of grace, salvation, and holiness. Wilford, *Sacred Subdivisions*, 4. While it is possible Keller had Warren's approach in mind when he crafted his theology of work, Keller had ample resources within his Reformed theological tradition to arrive at a similar elevation of work into ministry. In fact, Keller's theology of work and cultural activity seems to be taken whole cloth out of the Kuyperian Dutch Reformed tradition, which Harvie Conn would have exposed him to during his time at Westminster Theological Seminary. Matthew Kaemingk provides a succinct summary of the Kuyperian Dutch Reformed tradition, centered on the writings of the nineteenth century Dutch theologian and prime minister Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920): "Kuyper argues relentlessly that the church has not been established simply to serve its own internal politics or growth strategies, but to embody Christ in the world for its restoration, development, and flourishing. Worldly work, in and of itself, glorifies God." Matthew Kaemingk, "Faith, Work, and Beards: Why Abraham Kuyper Thinks We Need All Three," *Comment,* July 8, 2011, https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/faith-work-and-beards-why-abraham-kuyper-thinks-we-need-all-three/.

secular world, competing with non-Christians, to produce material characterized both by excellence and by a Christian worldview."[46] In so doing, Keller had high hopes that these young urban professionals would "show the world a vision of life and work under the lordship of Christ" that would in turn work to redeem New York City in its entirety—individuals, their work, as well as the neighborhoods and larger political and social institutions.[47] Through espousing this theology of work, Keller's preaching infused the work of young urban professionals in New York City with spiritual significance by assigning it a place within the larger twentieth-century evangelical initiative to bring cultural renewal to New York City and, through New York City, to the rest of the world. For the driven urban professionals who had no intention of halting their career climb in New York City, Keller's theology of work opened the door for them to contribute to cultural renewal by continuing to do the work they had been intent on doing anyway.

While this pro-work theology was obviously designed to grab the attention of his young urban professional listeners, it also introduced a certain measure of risk. By imbuing the everyday work of these young urban professionals with spiritual significance, they could receive the individual spiritual benefit of being part of the larger evangelical drama to bring cultural renewal to New York City simply by doing their jobs well. Tailoring his theology of work to be compelling to these young urban professionals left them with little reason to take additional steps toward contributing more directly to the evangelical beachhead Keller wanted to create within New York City. Keller made clear what some of those additional steps would be. In one sermon, Keller exhorted "the vision campaign is

---

[46] Tim Keller, "Redeemer Newsletter," April 1997, quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 152.
[47] Bartholomew points out that these words echo Abraham Kuyper's assertion that "every inch of creation belongs to Christ." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 155.

something I hope some of you will give to. We are asking for 15 million dollars in 3 years in over and above pledges. 50% will go to [buying] a building, 25% for ministries in the building, and 25 to church planting." Perhaps recognizing that this was a big ask, Keller admonished, "Why does money have power over us? The problem with people in this country and in this world is not because they don't give money away. The problem is they don't give away in biblical portions with biblical joy. If people gave in the proper proportions then all the ministries would have all the money they needed."[48] These calls to give more to the ministries at Redeemer did not necessarily create a sense of urgency among Keller's young urban professional audience. His pro-work theology, like his pro-city theology, had already bestowed a healthy measure of spiritual benefit on them for the work they were already doing in their current professions. While Keller's ability to connect with these young urban professionals through his preaching was uncanny, to some degree crafting his evangelical message so elegantly and eloquently for them limited Keller's ability to motivate them to exert cultural influence for his evangelical brand up to their full potential.[49] This theme continues when considering the novel ways in which Keller applied his traditional evangelical message to the everyday experiences of these young urban professionals.

---

[48] S68, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Wealth."

[49] Bartholomew discovered that even when these young urban professionals did more than try to do their work well and show up at Sunday worship, they tended to understand their sense of mission within New York City largely in terms of personal ethical standards, such as doing evangelism, avoiding "immoral" behavior, and volunteering at a soup kitchen or some other charitable ministry. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 165. Viera also discovered that though each Redeemer small group contained a "serving the city" component that was meant to encourage them to "seek the peace and prosperity of the city," the groups rarely did more than volunteer at agencies that provided services to the sick and needy of New York City, forgoing any effort to achieve broad cultural renewal that promotes racial justice at a societal level. Viera, "Sexual Ethics," 22.

Keller's Evangelical Brand As The Cure For What Ails

Keller's knack for connecting his preaching to the everyday lives of the young urban

professionals who gathered for worship at Redeemer's worship service extended to the

way in which he applied his evangelical message. The core evangelical message within

Keller's sermons was not in itself particularly innovative.[50] Keller preached that people

must realize they are sinners before God. People then had to further acknowledge that

Jesus offered himself as a substitutionary atonement for their sin, paid the penalty of God's

wrath on the cross, and rose from the dead to offer them new life. Finally, people had to

believe that Jesus did all this for them strictly out of God's grace, for no other reason than

God loved them. Almost every one of Keller's sermons ended with a revivalist appeal for his

listeners to acknowledge and believe that Jesus took on the punishment meant for them so

that they could be saved from their sin and God's judgment. Of course, Keller articulated

this appeal with much snappier language, stating "the gospel of Jesus Christ [means] that

though I am weaker and more sinful than I ever would have dared admit, in Christ I am

more loved and accepted than I ever imagined possible."[51]

Keller's articulation of the core content of his evangelical message was reminiscent

of such Protestant Reformers as Martin Luther and John Calvin as well as such revivalists as

George Whitefield and Charles Spurgeon.[52] In fact, the core content of Keller's evangelical

---

[50] The exception to this could be Keller's theology of the city described in the foregoing section. Although Keller took most of his theology of the city from Conn's work, Conn's theology of the city was arguably an innovation that built on the affirmation of culture featured in the Kuyperian Dutch Reformed tradition. Gornick, "The Legacy of Harvie M. Conn," 213-215. Keller's theology of work, also described in the previous section, might seem like an innovation, but is actually a fairly straight-forward application of the theology of work developed by Abraham Kuyper. Kaemingk, "Faith, Work, and Beards."
[51] S62, Keller, "The Gospel." Bartholomew notes that this language had sunk in with Redeemer worship attendees as well. Bartholomew, Reviving Orthodoxy, 95.
[52] Viera found that while Redeemer was new in terms of its place within New York City relative to other churches on the Upper East Side, it embraced the "historic Christian faith as expressed in the creeds and

message would not have differed significantly from that of Straton and Graham.[53] The innovation in Keller's sermons was more in application than content. He offered an old-time, revivalist gospel as the solution to all that bedeviled his audience of young urban professionals. As is demonstrated in this section, the proper understanding and application of Keller's evangelical message would provide these young urban professionals with access to the door through which they could find the solution for the problems that they faced as they strove to "make it" in New York City.

Keller exhibited an almost clairvoyant ability to discern the troubles that dogged these young urban professionals in New York City. Often living alone and away from their familial support systems, Keller identified career ambition as dominating their attention. Their high level of occupational ambition drove these young urban professionals to "work themselves into the ground" for their careers. Keller warned them that New York City beat down people who came to "make it" in their careers and then painted a vivid portrait of the way this happens:

> You might come to New York, and you were the best singer in your little town, because you are going to have a career in singing ... [A]s you go to your auditions and are listening to other people in the room auditioning through the door, you hear voices that are inaccessibly better than you, and you're crushed because [New York City exposes] your denial of your mediocrity. You're dismantled. Woe is me!"[54]

---

scriptures, and as a Presbyterian Church subscribes to the Westminster Confession." Viera, "Sexual Ethics," 19. Bartholomew noted that Keller teaches a "traditional message" that entails an acknowledgment that the self is deeply flawed and sinful and that God has shown love to people through the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 95.

[53] Fosdick's liberal evangelicalism arguably innovated not only with how evangelicalism is presented, but also at the level of the core content of evangelical belief. Keller and Fosdick showed some similarities in their attempt to craft a preaching style that their mostly white and educated audience of New Yorkers would find compelling. Even so, Keller remained more traditional than Fosdick with respect to the core content of his evangelical message.

[54] S69, Tim Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, November 13, 2005) MP3 Audio.

In other sermons, Keller indicated he knew the pain of those young urban professionals who had achieved career success and still felt beat down by New York City. Success had not brought them satisfaction, because "you are a slave of the culture. The culture is the mill and you are the grist, and if you don't practice sabbath, then you are exploited."[55] To these overworked young urban professionals struggling with the harsh reality of the mercilessly competitive work culture in New York City, Keller presented himself as someone who fully appreciated the troubles, frustrations, and heartache they had encountered.

Having established himself as someone who knew their pain, Keller preached that his evangelical message held the key to the satisfaction they had been "working themselves in the ground" to achieve through their careers. According to Keller, the key to experiencing this satisfaction was both plain and simple. These young urban professionals needed to repent.[56] The call to repent has been a homiletical trope dating back at least as far as the New Testament, and it generally means to turn toward God and away from sin. Keller's innovation surfaced in how he applied this familiar trope to the context of these young urban professionals in New York City. Defining sin as more of a "disposition," an "attitude," or a "posture of the heart" than the violation of a moral code, Keller preached that sin originated from a person's unwillingness to submit to God.

> The character of sin is … a deep interior dislocation of the soul…. When a hip or bone of any sort is dislocated, what's the problem? It's off center. It's not centered at the spot it should be and as a result it wreaks tremendous havoc. The muscles, the tissue—there's all this cutting and grinding, you see, and there is tremendous damage being done. Your hip doesn't work. You can't walk. You can't move. Sin is a dislocation of the soul—the soul should be centered on God. If there is a God, then

---

[55] S64, Keller, "Community."

[56] To make this theological concept more accessible for these young urban professionals, Keller broke it down into four digestible elements based on a four-step method that had been developed by the seventeenth-century Puritans as a guide to the process of repentance. S29, Tim Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 1)" (sermon) *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 24, 1996), MP3 Audio.

he'd be the great creator, and everything in our life should revolve around him. But we said sin is the demand of the heart that everything, including God, revolve around me—my happiness, my goals, my agenda, what makes me comfortable. That's sin—a dislocation of the soul. And all our problems come from our unwillingness to center on him because we do not want to lose control. [57]

This "dislocation of the soul" caused "natural pursuits" such as sexuality, careers, financial success, relationships, happiness, which were not in themselves sinful, to become "ultimate pursuits" that took the place that God was supposed to have within the human heart.[58] For these young urban professionals, "making it" in New York City had become an "ultimate pursuit," which prompted them to work themselves "into the ground" to achieve their career ambitions. Keller even used therapeutic language so that his sermons on repentance would connect better with young urban professionals, indicating that they were "in denial" about both the reality of sin and the "internal dynamic of the soul" and that they were in need of an "intervention" from God.[59] If they repented, they would realize their inability to become "great" apart from "God" and "his grace," which would free them from feeling like they had to work themselves into the ground for their careers and release them from the stress and emotional turmoil that working so hard to accomplish their career ambitions had caused.[60]

Keller further admonished these young urban professionals to avoid ascribing the cause of their misery to the hard circumstances of living and working in New York City. The true source of their misery arose not from those circumstances, but from a response to

---

[57] Tim Keller, "The Anatomy of Sin, Part 1," January 22, 1995, quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 98.
[58] Keller, "The Anatomy of Sin, Part 1," quoted in Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 98.
[59] S28, Tim Keller, "Sin as Slavery" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 17, 1996), MP3 Audio. See also Bartholomew, Reviving Orthodoxy, 109.
[60] S22, Tim Keller, "Sin as Self-Deceit" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church), MP3 Audio.

those circumstances that did not include repentance.[61] As part of their repentance, these young urban professionals needed to "stick with" God in order to receive the promised sense of satisfaction and personal well-being. Keller drove this point home by referring to a trend he discovered in his interactions with people who came to him seeking counsel.

> [People say] God did not stick with me. I prayed for this and I prayed for that and he abandoned me. If you are God's friend then you stick with God even when it feels like God has abandoned you. If you think God has abandoned you, you won't see what God is doing for you. If you stick with God, then you realize God hasn't abandoned you.[62]

They were upset because they prayed for something and instead of giving them what they were asking for, they felt that God had abandoned them in their time of need. Keller decried this approach to God as self-serving, exhorting his young urban professional listeners that the only way to come to know that God had not abandoned them was to stick with God even when it felt like they had been abandoned. Building in a clever way to dodge the criticism that repentance and perseverance in the relationship with God did not in fact bring satisfaction into their lives, Keller insisted that if these young urban professionals had not experienced the benefits that had been promised, it was because they had not properly appropriated what he was preaching. Keller set himself up as the messenger, leaving the power to experience satisfaction and inner well-being in the hands of his young urban professional listeners.

Keller further admonished these young urban professionals not to try to seek existential satisfaction through any religion or philosophy outside of the evangelical faith

---

[61] S21, Tim Keller, "Sin as Predator" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, January 28, 1996), MP3 Audio.

[62] S44, Tim Keller, "God Our Friend" (sermon), *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 24, 2000) MP3 Audio.

he proclaimed. In one sermon, Keller placed the last thing Buddha said, "Strive without ceasing," next to the last thing Jesus said, "It is finished." Keller then urged his listeners to see that Buddha left "his followers with an unrelenting call to make themselves right" while Jesus left his followers "with relief from that burden, having himself made them right."[63] Abstracting them from their particular historical context, Keller summed up all religious leaders as people who had perceived "an infinite chasm" between deity and humanity that must be bridged.

> Every other religious leader who showed up brought temples and houses of worship…because every religion recognizes there's a chasm, there's an infinite chasm between deity and humanity that has to be bridged, and so every single religious founder brings codes of conduct and rituals and sacrificial systems and mediatorial systems and priests and houses and temples and says if you do all these things you can bridge that gap, but Jesus Christ is the only one who says 'no, I lived the life you should have lived, I died the death you should have died. My destroyed and resurrected body is the bridge over the infinite chasm between deity and humanity, because I fell into that infinite chasm. I paid the penalty. I'm the ultimate priest that ends all priests. I'm the ultimate sacrifice that ends all sacrifice. I'm the ultimate temple. I've come to replace the temple.'[64]

In no other religion could salvation be received by grace and not by works.[65] To the already strained and overworked young urban professionals gathered in the worship at Redeemer, the concept of salvation by grace meant they would not need to add anything else to their already overburdened schedules to gain favor with God. Keller wanted these young urban professionals to realize that only the evangelical faith, as expressed through his sermons, could satisfy their existential need for relief and security amid the demands of their chosen professions and lives within New York City.

---

[63] S65, Tim Keller, "Witness" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 16, 2005) MP3 Audio.
[64] S68, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Wealth."
[65] S25, Keller, "Sin as Self-Righteousness."

Recognizing that the Bible does contain several codes of conduct, Keller stressed that these should not be understood as rules for salvation, but rather guidance on how to live well. Keller contended that "consciences have to be calibrated…. You can't trust your own experiences…. There must be a standard of right and wrong higher than your heart, because people have done terrible things and feel just fine. There is no secular answer for guilt. You must be taught about what you should feel guilty about."[66] The conduct codes in the Bible then function as the means by which people learn what is right and wrong so that humanity would be delivered from a world in which morality and injustice are relative. Keller recognized that climbing the career ladder in New York City could force morally ambivalent, if not questionable, decisions on young urban professionals, placing them within a morally relativistic reality akin to what he was describing. By offering deliverance from moral relativism, Keller was providing a means of quieting any existential unease these young urban professionals might have been experiencing as they pursued their career ambitions in New York City. Keller essentially promised that the evangelical faith he preached would satisfy the existential needs of his young urban professional listeners.

Keller also promised other immense benefits would come to these young urban evangelicals through the proper appropriation of his preaching. "You can handle anything when God is a reality."[67] They would be able to enjoy a psychological ballast that would empower them to "live life like a hot knife through butter."

> Do you move through the circumstances of this life like a hot knife through butter? Before you can live life like a hot knife through butter, you have to already know and understand and believe that Jesus Christ really was the Son of God, really died, really passed through the heavens and is now seated up there…[it is] not good enough to come to a church and say I need some spiritual power but I can't believe what the

---

[66] S29, Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 1)."
[67] S69, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self."

New Testament says. I can't believe that Jesus was the Son of God, I can't believe in the physical resurrection.[68]

Keller essentially offered a doctrinal litmus test as the mechanism by which his listeners can access this incredible way of living life. If these young urban professionals were not able to believe in those things, then they would not have access to a strength and power that would endow them with this uncanny ability to handle life's ups and downs.

True joy would come to these young urban professionals not when they accomplished their career goals (if they ever did), but when they appreciated the lengths to which Jesus went to pay for their sin and demonstrate God's love. Two kinds of pride blinded them from seeing this. "Pride says I'm too good for grace. God owes me. Another kind of pride says I don't want God's grace unless I've earned it. I'm too bad."[69] Both options were wrong because God's grace could never be earned. Pride lurked always in their hearts and, if left unchecked, would prevent these young urban professionals from seeing the love God had shown to people through Jesus' sacrifice. "When you receive instead of achieve the great thing [salvation in Christ through God's grace], then in God's sight you appear as if you were never sullied, as if you had never sinned."[70] "If there's a lack of joy in your life today, if the thought of Jesus does not revolutionize you, then you have not seen how deep he went to pay for you."[71] Keller was promising that the interior emotional life of these young urban professionals would be "revolutionized" through faith in Jesus, allowing them to experience true joy.

---

[68] S61, Tim Keller, "Christ, Our Life" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 18, 2005), MP3 Audio.

[69] S23, Tim Keller "Sin as Leaven" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, February 4, 1996) MP3 Audio.

[70] S26, Tim Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 3, 1996) MP3 Audio.

[71] S23, Keller, "Sin as Leaven."

As a reinforcement of this theme, Keller admonished his young urban professional listeners that faith in Jesus was more than "a matter of cognition" or a "vague mystical experience."[72] "You can't just believe in Jesus with your head. It's not just a matter of cognition—Jesus has to become precious to you… When you see that you were so precious to him, that he would die for you and pay the penalty for your sin, then finally you come to see that you were precious to him." After apprehending how precious they were to Jesus, Keller promised that when "you're that affirmed deep down in your soul, then you don't go to hang out with who will make you feel good about yourself. You go out not to affirm but to be affirming. You can love people, even those who misunderstand you."[73] To these career-driven, ambitious young urban professionals who sought the affirmation of their superiors, Keller's promise that they would feel affirmed through Jesus was designed to function like an ointment that could soothe the rawness of their inner emotional life.

Keller's preaching, with its focus on the centrality of Jesus' substitutionary atonement, was proffered as an opportunity to "taste the sweetness" of the grace God had shown these young urban professionals through Jesus.[74] In another sermon, Keller assured his listeners that their hearts would be "melted" by "God the Father's love" during the worship at Redeemer.[75] Aware of the audaciousness of these promised benefits, Keller also recognized "that this is literally too good to be true."[76] To counter any incredulity about the benefits he was promising, Keller frequently articulated how God's grace was shown

[72] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)."
[73] S70, Tim Keller, "The Gospel, the Church, and the World" (sermon), The Vision of Redeemer Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, November 20, 2005), MP3 Audio.
[74] S28, Keller, "Sin as Slavery."
[75] S43, Tim Keller, "God Our Father" (sermon), *Four Ways To Live; Four Ways To Love* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 17, 2000) MP3 Audio.
[76] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."

through Jesus' sacrifice as the primary way to address whatever was wrong in the lives of his young urban professional listeners. "Do you see what your problem is? You can always understand it and best understand it in terms of the Gospel."[77] Through the appropriate application of Keller's evangelical message, young urban professionals would be able to experience an inner peace and satisfaction that was otherwise elusive amid the emotional fatigue of their steep career climb in New York City.

As a preacher who presented himself as sensitive to their struggles of trying to "make it" in New York City, Keller offered his evangelical message as a spiritual balm to help these ambitious and overworked young urban professionals manage their internal, emotional life. He promised them a solution to their pain through the proper appropriation of the traditional evangelical message as articulated in his sermons. Keller recast this traditional evangelical message, particularly such concepts as repentance, using therapeutic language. Repentance was not portrayed as a spiritual discipline, but as a therapeutic technique that would displace stress and emotional strain with satisfaction and a sense of personal well-being. Keller's sermons undoubtedly demonstrated an incredible pastoral sensitivity when speaking to the problems facing his young urban professional audience. Yet it is not clear that this pastoral sensitivity would mobilize these young urban professionals to be agents of evangelical cultural renewal in New York City. Like Keller's pro-city and pro-work theology, the benefits offered through repentance were able to be experienced by these young urban professionals as individuals. Again, Keller's ability to speak to the spiritual and emotional needs of these young urban professionals worked

---

[77] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."

against his overarching desire to motivate them to exert greater cultural influence for his evangelical brand within and through New York City.

Keller's uncanny ability to connect with the spiritual and emotional needs of his young urban professional audience also associated his evangelical brand with the needs and interests of a segment of the white, middle- to upper-class population in New York City. The majority of the young urban professionals who attended Redeemer's worship services were a white, migratory population who had come to New York City to "make it" in their careers. The pro-work and pro-city theology of Keller's sermons then skewed toward addressing the needs and interests of a white, middle- to upper-class population. For the people of color who had lived in New York City throughout the latter twentieth century, Keller's pro-work and pro-city theology would not have addressed their challenges. For instance, African-Americans who grew up in Harlem during the latter twentieth century simply did have the same opportunities for education and career advancement as the white populations who had grown up in the affluent suburbs surrounding New York City. For this African-American population, finding work that paid the bills would have been a much higher priority than seeing how their work was meaningful by virtue of its contribution to cultural renewal. Additionally, Keller's pro-city theology was designed to encourage white populations in the suburbs to see the spiritual value of living New York City, not to addresses the hardships caused by the systemic racism experienced by people of color who were already living there. As a result, Keller's evangelical brand then became a white expression of the evangelical faith meant to connect with a growing segment of the white population in New York City. Keller did not explicitly link his preaching to a white expression of the evangelical faith. This linkage occurred subtly, without Keller's intention

and most likely without even his awareness, as the result of crafting his sermons to address the needs of young urban professionals. As will be described more completely in the subsequent chapter, the linkage of Keller's preaching to a white expression of the evangelical faith ultimately undercut the ability of Keller's evangelical message to be a means of combatting the racialized social order that privileged whites over other races in late twentieth-century New York City.

Making Evangelical Faith Sensible

In addition to connecting with young urban professionals in New York City at the emotional level, Keller sought to offer them an intellectually defensible evangelical message as well. Given that by the 1980s evangelicalism had become associated with the Republican Right, Keller was sensitive to the reality that this association would make an evangelical faith abhorrent to most New Yorkers, including the young urban professionals who attended the worship services at Redeemer. Much of the content of Keller's sermons, though containing traditional evangelical doctrine, was devoted to distancing what he preached from being associated with evangelicalism. Keller's aim was to make the evangelical faith acceptable and sensible to highly educated, urbane young urban professionals even amid the hostility toward evangelicalism they encountered in New York City. For these young urban professionals to become the influential agents of cultural renewal, Keller had to give them an evangelical message that was sensible enough for them to carry with them into their workplaces and social lives in New York City.

Keller's sermons incorporated several strategies for making his evangelical message sensible to his young urban professional listeners. First, he assumed that not everyone present at the worship service believed in what he was preaching. Anticipating that some

of his listeners were ambivalent as to whether to accept his evangelical message, Keller

often anticipated their objections and then offered counter arguments in his sermons.[78] For

instance, in a sermon entitled "God our Father," Keller noted that people seemed to be

generally all right with a "loving God," but did not accept an "angry" or "wrathful God."

Keller countered this position by noting that choosing to exclude certain aspects of God's

nature made God "one-dimensional" and "flat," more like a "cartoon character" than an

"infinitely complex being."[79] Employing this anticipated-objection and counterargument

dynamic in his sermons allowed Keller to give the impression that he was in dialogue with,

instead of just preaching at, those young urban professionals who might be skeptical. This

"dialogic" approach created an illusion that his young urban professional listeners were

actively engaged in conversation with him rather than being prodded to accept what Keller

was preaching. Keller's dialogic approach prevented his preaching from seeming dogmatic,

allowing his young urban professional audience to be more engaged than put off by it.[80]

     Another way that Keller distanced his preaching from being associated with

evangelicalism was in his reticence over using the word "evangelical" to describe the

---

[78] Bartholomew found that Keller employed a "lecture" or dialogical style that appealed to educated New Yorkers who were not as comfortable with a "preachy" sermon. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 94. Zylstra describes Keller's style of preaching as "calm and intellectual, much more professional than firebrand," which "fits well" with the unbelieving and ambitious professionals that he kept in mind as he prepared his sermons. Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[79] S43 Keller, "God Our Father." Other examples of this anticipated-objection and counterargument dynamic can be found in S42, Tim Keller, "Considering the Great Love of God" (sermon), *Four Ways To Live; Four Ways To Love* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, September 10, 2000), MP3 Audio; S03, Tim Keller, "Why Do We Need the Bible?" (sermon), *Sermon on the Mount* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 18, 1990), MP3 Audio; S15, Tim Keller, "The Freedom of the Truth, Part 2" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, June 26, 1994), MP3 Audio.

[80] Although this "dialogic approach" was more present in Keller's earlier sermons, it ultimately gave way to a more direct "apologetic engagement" in his latter sermons. By the time Keller preached *The Vision of Redeemer* sermon series in 2005, some 16 years after Redeemer's first worship service, the explicit references to people who could be skeptical became more sparse. Keller's apologetic engagement is further described later in this section.

225

community at Redeemer. He tended to prefer the more generic term "Christian." Keller

refrained from explicitly referring to Redeemer Presbyterian Church as evangelical, and in

only one sermon within the representative sample did Keller explicitly suggest that

Redeemer might possibly fit the category of evangelical.[81] Keller went to great lengths,

especially in his earlier sermons, to suggest that there was "only one kind of Christianity."[82]

Rather than claim an explicitly evangelical identity, Keller reached for an identity that is

"Christian" and surpassed all other distinctions.[83] Keller promoted the content of his

sermons as being aligned with historic Christianity, thereby granting it an authority that

was linked directly to the historic church of the New Testament.[84] By describing his

evangelical message as Christian, Keller not only asserted the superiority of his evangelical

message relative to what was preached in other churches and denominations, he also

distanced himself from an association with evangelicalism that would be politically

problematic in New York City. By refraining from explicitly taking on the label of

evangelical, Keller was communicating subtly to his young urban professional listeners that

the evangelical message he preached was not necessarily evangelical at all. Instead, Keller

was preaching a Christian message that would be much less politically loaded to skeptical

young urban professionals living in New York City.[85]

---

[81] S02, Tim Keller, "Spirit & Presence of God" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, December 10, 1989), MP3 Audio.

[82] S03, Keller, "Why Do We Need the Bible?"

[83] Not only did this distance the content of Keller's sermons from being categorized as "evangelical," it also set Keller's evangelical message up as being above the interdenominational bickering that has shaped Protestantism.

[84] Bartholomew indicated that by "historic Christianity," Keller meant "the gospel of the Reformation." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 170.

[85] Yet there are occasions when Keller exhibited a certain defensiveness that betrayed his evangelical leanings. In one of his sermons, Keller took exception to the idea advanced by an article he read after 9/11 that religious fundamentalism always led to terrorism. "Have you ever seen an Amish terrorist?", Keller rhetorically asked his listeners. Keller then insisted that "fundamentalism doesn't always lead to terror. It depends on what the fundamental is. Putting Jesus as the center… that exclusive view [is] based on serving

By far the strategy that Keller used most often to make his sermons seem sensible to young urban professionals could be characterized as an "apologetic engagement." "Apologetic" here is used in the sense of the theological discipline of apologetics within the Reformed tradition. Within the Reformed tradition, apologetics employs logic, reasoning, and even rationalistic argumentation to defend the "truth" of Christianity against claims of falsehood.[86] In taking up the mantle of a Reformed apologist, Keller's preaching resembled something in between the lecture of a distinguished scholar and the closing argument of a sharp-tongued litigator.[87] In his sermons, Keller repeatedly argued that Christianity was not only "true," but that it provided answers to ultimate questions that made more sense and were more existentially satisfying than any other religion or philosophy. Through this apologetic engagement, Keller wanted to cultivate the sense that among the myriad of diverse perspectives and opinions in New York City, only his evangelical message was reliable and trustworthy.[88] The remainder of the content analysis of this chapter

---

the world and taking on the suffering this brings to you. That exclusive view can never lead to terrorism." S70, Keller, "The Gospel, the Church, and the World."

[86] B.B. Warfield (1887-1921), one of the most influential figures within the Reformed tradition in the United States, defined the task of apologetics as establishing the "truth of Christianity as the absolute religion." B.B. Warfield, "Apologetics," at https://reformed.org/apologetics/index.html, originally published in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnalis Company 1908): 232-238. Keller would have been steeped in the Reformed tradition of apologetics as a result of being on the faculty at Westminster Presbyterian Seminary. Since its inception by Machen in 1929 as a reactionary alternative to modernist theology, defending what the faculty considered to be "true" Christianity was part of the ethos at Westminster Theological Seminary. In fact, one of the key Reformed apologists in the United States during the twentieth century, Cornelius Van Til, was on faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary from 1929 to 1972. For more information on Van Til's apologetics, see John Frame, *Van Til: The Theologian* (Pasedena, TX: Pilgrim Publication 1976).

[87] Dee Pifer, Keller's longtime friend and a founding member of Redeemer, would invite colleagues from her Manhattan law firm saying, "I want you to hear a really good litigator." See Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 22.

[88] Keller was very successful at creating this sense among his listeners, one of whom commented "I came for the sermons" and described Keller as having an "ability to relate the gospel" unlike anyone he had ever heard before. Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 127.

interrogates the various mechanisms and strategies Keller used in his sermons to generate this apologetic engagement.[89]

Apologetic Engagement: Better Than the Binaries

Various mechanisms were operative within the apologetic engagement in Keller's sermons. First, Keller routinely divided the possible approaches to an issue or circumstance into a binary and then demonstrated that neither side was in step with his evangelical message. When preaching on the Parable of The Prodigal Son, Keller reduced all human behavior directed toward God to two basic approaches, moral conformity, as exemplified by the older brother, and self-discovery, as exemplified by the younger brother.

> Each side says this is the way you'll be happy. And Jesus says you're both wrong… You're both lost. You're both making the world a terrible place in different ways…. The older brother divides the world in two, the good and the bad. The good are in and the bad are out. The younger brother also divides the world in two. The open-minded progressive people are in and the bigoted and judgmental people are out. [Jesus] says it's the humble who are in and the proud who are out. He says it's the people who know they are not good or open-minded enough and they need sheer grace who are in and the people who think they are on the right side of those divides are out. [90]

Humans suffered from either "younger brother lostness" or "elder brother lostness" and both were "terrible," equally bringing strife and heartache. Adjusting the binary to a different context, Keller quipped that "the red states think the blue states are the trouble, and the blue states think the red states are the trouble, and Jesus says you're all in trouble

---

[89] The reason almost half of the content analysis of Keller's sermons focuses on his apologetic engagement is because Keller devoted most of the content in his sermons to this apologetic engagement. The disproportionate amount devoted to this apologetic engagement leads to an inference that Keller was interested in more than simply being an apologist for his evangelical brand with his young urban professional listeners. This inference is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.
[90] S60, Keller, "The Prodigal Sons." Although it should be noted that on some occasions, Keller placed the Gospel into a binary with self-salvation and insisted that the Gospel side of the binary was the correct pole. See S62, Keller, "The Gospel."

and I love you," prompting laughter from his audience. The "Gospel of Jesus Christ" was not "religion or irreligion. It's not morality or immorality. It's not moralism or relativism. It's off the scale. It's not half way in the middle. It's something else."[91] Keller articulated his evangelical message as a binary-buster that would allow these young urban professionals to live within the existentially superior liminal space between "older brother lostness" and "younger brother lostness."

Keller's evangelical message also functioned as a binary buster for "sectarian religious groups" and "mainstream chaplaincy groups,"[92] the two modes into which Keller reduced all Christian religious communities in his sermon "The Gospel, the Church, and the World." Sectarian religious groups were depicted as "separate, exclusive, living in a world of insiders and outsiders." The mainstream chaplaincy were regarded as "integrated with" and "totally inclusive" to the world around them. The mainstream chaplaincy groups adopted and assimilated the values of the cultural elite to be accepted by and have influence over those elites. The sectarian groups sought to mobilize power among those who oppose the values of the cultural elite by vilifying the "world outside" their religious communities. Keller denounced them both. "We [Christians] are not called to be mainstream or sectarian… Christians are another genus, a chosen race, a holy nation. We don't fit into western relativistic individualism. We don't fit into traditional hierarchical legalism. We don't fit. We don't fit conservative. We don't fit liberal. We've always been

---

[91] S60, Keller, "The Prodigal Sons."
[92] Here Keller chose an unfortunately obscure label. It appears from the context of the sermon that by "sectarian religious groups" he meant fundamentalist or evangelical Christians and by "mainstream chaplaincy groups" he meant Protestant mainline. S70, Keller, "The Gospel, the Church, and the World."

aliens." The reason no culture fit Christians was because their communities, according to

Keller, were supposed to be organized around suffering instead of power.

> If you assimilate [like the mainstream] you don't suffer and everyone thinks you're fine. If you attack and withdraw [like the sectarian], you don't suffer and everyone thinks you're weird. If you give yourself to the world in which you are a resident alien, the world will vilify us. They will misunderstand us. They have to, because the inner logic of their worldview is different than the inner logic of ours. [93]

Because the world did not reciprocate this self-sacrificial generosity, the Christian

community would inevitably be misunderstood and suffer as a result. Here the binary not

only was meant to appear as better than other religious options, it had the added benefit of

allowing Keller to plant subtly the idea that their purpose in New York City was not

fundamentally to advance in their careers, but to take on the adversity that would result

from living out the evangelical faith of Keller's sermons.

This sectarian-mainstream binary also furthered the subtle linkage of Keller's

preaching with a white expression of the evangelical faith. Keller described the sectarians

as a militant group that opposed the surrounding culture, calling up an image of the early

twentieth-century fundamentalists such as Straton. The mainstream chaplaincy groups, on

the other hand, were reminiscent of the liberal and modernist Protestants represented by

such early twentieth-century figures as Fosdick. As was noted in chapter one, the debate

between the fundamentalists and modernists of the early twentieth century was between

differing white factions within U.S. Protestantism. While these two white factions were

vying against each other to lay claim to the "true" expression Christianity, Pentecostal

expressions of the Christian faith favored by many pastors and religious leaders of color

were left out of the debate entirely. In fact, the views of African American pastors who were

---

[93] S70, Keller, "The Gospel, the Church, and the World."

sympathetic to the views of the fundamentalists were still precluded from entering into the debate, because these African American fundamentalists urged their white counterparts to include the social sin of racism within their premillennial dispensational theologies. In the end, the fundamentalist-modernist controversy was between warring white factions locked in a struggle to determine which white expression would win out as the "true" evangelical brand. By reducing all Christian religious groups to a binary that resembled the fundamentalists and modernists of the early twentieth century, Keller ultimately privileged white expressions as the only ones that could be "true." Situating his evangelical brand between these two white expressions of the Christian faith, Keller not only inadvertently aligned it with these other white expressions of the Christian faith, but also, without his knowledge or intention, offered his evangelical brand as a better, though still white, expression of the Christian faith to his late twentieth-century young urban professional audience.

More typical reductionist binaries were also featured in Keller's sermons. For instance, Keller posited eastern religions as believing that the "material world is illusory" and western religions as deeming the material world "defiling and debasing." Keller then taught that the material world was deemed "good and worthy" as the resource from which humans could draw out "enormous potentialities" to promote the "flourishing of human beings and human community."[94] Keller also identified a deficiency in the liberal-conservative binary, arguing that both sides were trying to "solve a contradiction in God." The typical conservative position made God a "King" who loved those who "do the right things." The pervasive liberal approach held that God was a "friend" who "loves everyone"

---

[94] S67, Keller, "Culture."

and accepted their "bad behavior." In Keller's preaching, God was both King and friend by virtue of what Jesus did on the cross.

> [The] impossible love [of God] is revealed in Jesus… On the cross, and only on the cross, do you have a complex God, a real God, a non-cartoon God. If you don't believe in the cross then either you think God is a King and if you're good enough he will take you to heaven. That is a one-dimensional cartoon god of the conservative brand. Or you believe God loves everyone and didn't have to die for people's bad behavior. That is a one-dimensional god of the liberal brand. Only on the cross is God allowed to be complex, a real God.[95]

This "impossible love," which existed outside the conservative-liberal binary, was presented as the only thing that could truly change the hearts and minds of his young urban professional listeners.

Apologetic Engagement: Caricaturing Opposition and Aspiration

Keller depended on the use of caricatures as the second strategy to support the apologetic engagement of his evangelical message. In "Christ, Our Life," Keller referred to the argument of the "New York Humanist Organization" that "one of the worst things for society has been the belief in heaven and the afterlife," because that made people think they did not need to take care of this world. Pointing out their "deeply flawed logic," Keller argued that "if there is no bigger world than this, everything is permitted."[96] He aligned the New York Humanist Organization's statement with a "materialist approach that offered no coherent basis for morality or goodness."[97] Keller also tended to caricature "secularists" as holding inconsistent beliefs.

---

[95] S42, Keller, "Considering the Great Love of God."

[96] Keller acknowledged he was adapting the statement that Jean Paul-Sartre famously attributed to Dostoyevsky: "If God does not exist, everything is permissible." Jean Paul Sartre made this attribution in his essay "Existentialism Is A Humanism" (1945). It is unclear whether Dostoyevsky actually ever wrote these words, the closest to this quote coming in these words from the character Ratikin in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): "If the soul's not immortal, there's no virtue, either, and that means all things are lawful." Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Penguin Classics 1993, originally published in 1880).

[97] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."

> My skeptical secular friends care so much about justice for the poor. They care for alleviating hunger and disease. They care for the environment, and yet they believe that the material world was caused by accident, that all beliefs in right and wrong are social constructed and totally relative and that eventually the world and everything in it will burn up in the death of the sun, and then they find it discouraging that so few people care about justice without realizing that their own worldview completely undermines any motivation to work to make the world a place of peace and justice.[98]

Keller further caricatured "secular New Yorkers" as sneering at the "heavenly-mindedness of Christians." These "secular New Yorkers" believed that Christians are "so heavenly minded they are no earthly good"[99] and considered converting people to the evangelical faith as an expression of intolerance toward the surrounding culture. "[W]hen you [secular New Yorkers] say anyone who tries to convert someone to their worldview is intolerant, you're a hypocrite … because you won't admit what you're doing. Your view is itself a worldview! It is unavoidable to try to convert people to a non-innate, comprehensive approach to life."[100] In both caricatures, New Yorkers who adhered to no particular religious outlook were flattened into one-dimensional stick-figures that allowed Keller an occasion for proving the logical superiority of his evangelical message.

Keller also portrayed the religio-philosophical positions of "Columbia or any of those institutions of Western culture" as univocally holding to the belief that humans are "here by accident. We came from nothing and we are going to nothing. Eventually the sun is going to burn up and everything is going to go away and therefore whether you live a violent and cruel life or an incredibly loving and sacrificial life in the end will make absolutely no difference and everything will be forgotten."[101] Building on this, Keller

---

[98] S63, Keller, "The City."
[99] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."
[100] S65, Keller, "Witness."
[101] S64, Keller, "Community."

claimed that in "every college classroom in New York City" students were being taught that "all points of view are culturally relative." Keller pointed out that "[w]e human beings can do incredibly evil things, because we take a point of view that makes them not seem that evil. The problem is this allows anything to be justified. If you believe that every point of view is valid, then you'll be able to justify everything."[102] Similarly, Keller saw

> a lot of commonalities between pagan and modern sensibilities. Pagans wanted salvation to be elaborate, dramatic, mysterious, complex and did not like the idea that salvation could be simple. Cultic groups are flourishing because modern people are like pagans. New Age is flourishing because of its complexity. [Modern people] are insulted when I communicate the simple Gospel to them.[103]

The soteriology offered by both the mystery religions and the New Age Movement were caricatured as "complex" so that Keller could contrast them with his "simple," and therefore more accessible, evangelical message.

Not only did Keller's sermons show little interest in understanding why the groups and people he caricatured were making their claims, they also disregarded any possibility that there could be a defensible rationale for their claims. For instance, Keller did not acknowledge that the New York Humanist Organization or "secularists" probably operated on a defensible ontological or epistemological foundation for morality or ethics that had a source outside of divine revelation. In fact, it is not at all clear from his sermon that Keller accurately characterized (or even knew) what the people he caricatured actually believed about right and wrong. Drawing a straight line from the ancient mystery religions to the New Age pagan religions also neglected the significant differences between these movements that resulted from their radically disparate historical and cultural settings. It

---

[102] S30, Tim Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 2)" (sermon), *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 31, 1996), MP3 Audio.
[103] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)."

also strains credulity to suggest "Columbia or any of those institutions of Western culture" adhered to a monolithic position that acts of justice and cruelty were the same because they were temporary and forgotten. Furthermore, it seems highly improbable that "every college classroom in New York City" would have been engaged in uniform articulations of a theory of the cultural relativity of morality without any nuance. The elite educational institutions in New York City, and all of Keller's other targets, were reduced to caricatures so that Keller's preaching seemed more sensible than anything his listeners could learn from those institutions, even though many were likely graduates of these institutions. These caricatures were not designed to be fair depictions, but rather to serve as foils that would make the apologetic engagement of Keller's evangelical message sound more intellectually appealing to his young urban professional listeners.

Sometimes caricatures functioned in a positive way to bolster the apologetic engagement of Keller's sermons. For instance, Keller idealized the good attributes of various biblical figures. When preaching on Psalm 51, Keller noted that "David blew up his life as much as anybody ever has" and needed forgiveness. He then reasoned that even though

> [m]ore people in New York have blown up their lives more than everyone else, some people say that Psalm 51 isn't for me, because it's really only for people who have really screwed up. It stands as a warning, because if David the beloved, one of the most godly and great figures in the world, could blow up his life and need to seek forgiveness, do you think you're not going to need forgiveness?[104]

The complexities of the biblical figure of David were ironed out so that he became a caricature of the ideal projection of the repentant figure that Keller wanted his listeners to become. Keller extended this caricature of the idealized figure generically to "Christians,"

---

[104] S30, Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 2)."

arguing that anyone who thought Christianity was for the weak had not faced true

adversity.

> If you think Christianity is weak, then you just haven't faced the heat. What if the doctor said that you will be in a wheelchair the rest of your life? You would be devastated. You would fall apart. Don't say Christians are weak people who need this [evangelical faith], because Christians are the only ones who can face this [bad news from the doctor].[105]

This caricature of the idealized Christian seems outlandish, as Keller provided not even a

scintilla of evidence to support his claim that people who profess to a Christian faith handle

adversity better than people who do not. Nevertheless, Keller deployed this caricature of an

idealized Christian to strengthen the apologetic engagement of his sermons.

Keller also wove these caricatures into his use of binaries. He noted that every

culture had some "overlap with biblical values," but would vilify the church for its

countercultural values. Keller argued

> Eastern and traditional cultures like what the Bible says about sex and family, but they hate the turn the other cheek stuff. It should be 'an eye for an eye.' But come to New York City, a Western, individualistic culture, and pick up those two same things. They [in New York City] like the talk about forgiveness and reconciliation, but all that talk about sex and gender and family, how regressive! Every culture will both vilify and recognize us in different ways.[106]

Keller lumped all "eastern and traditional cultures" together as having one set of values and

all of New York City as having a singular, different set of values. Both "eastern and

traditional cultures" (whoever they might be) and New York City functioned as caricatures

that allowed Keller to fill out the content of the two opposing poles of a binary, and then he

used that binary to bolster the apologetic force of his evangelical message. He wanted to

give his young urban professional audience reassurance that his evangelical message was

---

[105] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief."
[106] S70, Keller, "The Gospel, the Church, and the World."

not some anti-intellectual, mindless set of beliefs, but rather the most sensible and intellectually appealing approach to life and work in New York City.

The caricatures Keller used in his sermons also contributed to the subtle ways in which Keller's preaching was aligned with a white expression of the evangelical faith. Keller chose to caricature elite educational institutions, such as Columbia University, and other elitist cultural organizations, such as the New York Humanist Society. These institutions were dominated by white leadership and were comprised of a vast majority of white faculty, students, or members. These institutions were ensconced in white perspective and catered to white interests. By reducing these white institutions to caricatures and taking them on as his primary adversaries, Keller indicated that only these white institutions could compete with his evangelical brand. By inserting his evangelical brand into competition with these white institutions, Keller unwittingly allowed his evangelical brand to be one of many white options. Thus, even when Keller caricatured his adversaries, he still privileged white culture and ultimately rendered his evangelical brand a competing expression of white culture.[107]

Apologetic Engagement: Universal Categories To Manage Experience

Another tool Keller used to enhance the apologetic engagement of his sermons was to shoehorn human experience into manageable, universalized categories that synced neatly with his evangelical message. In trying to answer the question of why human beings were capable of doing awful things to each other, Keller insisted that "[t]he sociological answer is never the answer. Racism is not the true cause of genocide and poverty not the true cause for doing contract killing for a few dollars…. Racism and poverty might be the

---

[107] Other ways in which Keller privileged white culture in his preaching are further explored in chapter four.

occasion but are not the reason. Sin is the true reason." Furthermore, Keller elevated

idolatry as "our core problem—the sin underneath the sins."[108] Humans have become their

own idols, and Keller universalized this as the fundamental problem that was causing all

personal, social, and political problems. This idolatry was portrayed as something

transcultural and transhistorical, operative in every human heart in any culture and in any

time period.

As an outgrowth of this universally fundamental problem of idolatry, Keller asserted

that "the default mode of every human heart … is self-justification, being your own savior

and lord."[109] "The default mode of every human heart and the basis for every religion is to

labor for what we want. But you can't really seek God that way. Then you aren't seeking

God but being your own savior and lord. You need to seek God through the way of grace

rather than through moral performance and labor."[110] Not only did idolatrous hearts make

people seek to be their own saviors, according to Keller, they also harbored a sense of pride

and self-sufficiency that destroyed their ability to love. Keller proposed that the only

antidote to the spiritual poison of this pride and self-sufficiency was suffering.

> Pride and self-sufficiency is building up in all of our hearts, and it destroys our ability to love. A minister spoke at two British boarding schools. A question and answer time followed the presentation. At the first boarding school, they weren't interested in really discussing things about life. The questions were not in good faith…. In the second school, the kids had cerebral palsy. They weren't necessarily more open to the Gospel, but they did not have the same flippancy. They didn't think the world was their oyster like the first group. We all are like that [first group], prone to self-sufficiency and pride and the shallowness that goes along with that. The suffering brought the students in the second school out of that. The Gospel always starts this way. It flattens your self-image, and then if you let the Gospel do

---

[108] S22, Keller, "Sin as Self-Deceit."
[109] S60, Keller, "The Prodigal Sons."
[110] S65, Keller, "Witness."

its dirty work, it will give you a self-view that is more than you ever could have imagined. Pride is the leprosy of the heart.[111]

Keller portrayed the "Gospel" in his sermons as provoking this much needed suffering. It "flattened" a person's self-image by revealing that nobody had any reason for pride or self-sufficiency. All were equally undeserving before God. Yet simultaneously all were also equally loved and rescued by God as both evidenced and effected through Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross. Keller's preaching then was supposed to help extract the "spiritual poison" of a self-image based on pride and replace it with the spiritual nourishment of a self-image based on God's love expressed through Jesus' sacrifice. In order to arrive at this point, Keller had to look past the diversity and particularity of the causes of the problems besetting individuals and society. Instead, Keller grouped these diverse and particular causes into the manageable, universalized category of idolatry to make his evangelical message seem like a reasonable way to rehabilitate what had gone wrong for his young urban professional listeners.

Keller also ignored issues of diversity or particularity among human desires by placing them all within universalized categories of ultimate concern. The stories that captured people's imaginations, according to Keller, all had a similar approach.

> The heroes are ordinary people in an ordinary place and something whisks them away…to a place that is larger than life. Always in these stories in spite of overwhelming odds, there's redemption. Victory is always snatched out of the jaws of defeat. Then people go back to their own land and they are larger than life. There is something different about them, and they move about with a freedom and power. They are seeing behind their ordinary world, that ultimate world, that beyond world. Evil in the ordinary world does not compare to the evil in the other world, so why be scared by the evil in this world?[112]

---

[111] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)."
[112] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."

Nothing phased them in the ordinary world, because in that other ultimate world, they had seen beauty and wonder and conflict in their true form. Keller argued this was available to everyone if "[t]hey get their imaginations captured by the greater world [in which Jesus] did die for you. Then you will move about with ... a sense of freedom and power like the heroes in those stories."[113] For the young urban professionals gathered to listen to Keller's sermons, Keller offered power and freedom in the midst of the demanding work environment of New York City. For this to make sense, however, Keller had to make the claim—at least implicitly—that he had inside knowledge about the ultimate desire of every human heart, including the hearts of the young urban professionals in his audience. In the absence of any supporting evidence, this claim seems easily recognizable as specious. Furthermore, Keller did not connect the dots in his sermons as to how believing in Jesus' death and resurrection would deliver this power and freedom within the everyday experience of his listeners. Keller used these universalized categories to iron out the particularly and diversity within human desire so that his sermons appeared to offer what every person was (or should be) looking for.

Keller also presumed that his evangelical message reached the ultimate longings of every human heart. For instance, Keller argued that there was no worse nightmare than not being able to be known. In the contemporary world in which people were mobile, "easy come and easy go, in and out of New York City, we need to know there's a place for us.... This is the human condition... We all need a sense of home and until we realize what we are truly after, which is the Lord's love, the only place where when you go there, they have to

---

[113] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."

take you in, where your place is always remembered."[114] For this to be effective, Keller first had to categorize the deepest longing of the human heart as that of finding a home, a place to belong. Another way of saying this is that Keller had to first force the diversity and particularity of longings within the human heart into this more manageable and collective category of "longing for home" in order for his evangelical message to be compelling.

Another universalized category Keller used was the "longing for existential rest." Keller contended that "there is something in which you existentially rest. Everyone has them. That is what your ultimate concern is." People trusted in something to provide that existential rest for them, and what people trusted in became their religion. Some sought this existential rest by trusting in the promises of a "materialist culture" that thinks having things provided this existential rest. Others trusted that their good deeds would bring them this existential rest. These people were always "trying to save other people." Still others trusted in their achievements to give them this rest. When one was a "great person" then one could do what one wanted and, ultimately, found rest. Only by trusting in the God who sent his Son to die for their sins would people ever find that existential rest they were seeking.[115] After projecting the longing for existential rest as the driving force behind the motivation to live in material comfort, be a moral person, or achieve greatness, Keller then supplied his sermons as the remedy for everyone's universalized longings, including those of his young urban professional listeners.

Keller also tended to place people's spirituality within manageable, universalized categories to magnify the apologetic engagement of his sermons. "The great conceit of the

---

[114] S43, Keller, "God Our Father."
[115] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief."

modern world is that we think we are searching for God, but we aren't…. We are really

seeking our own satisfaction. We aren't after the real God. We are looking for a tame God,

but the real God is wild. You will never find the real God until you read the Bible."[116]

Without any deference to its variegated forms and expressions throughout the history of

various ancient and modern civilizations, Keller shoehorned all human spirituality into a

collective category, namely the pursuit for self-satisfaction, so that he could make the point

that the "real God" could only be found in the Bible.

Keller continued on this theme by noting that some people needed proof or a sign

from God that God loved them. "Some are saying … I need a sign from God. The assumption

is that God owes you… even if God gave [you a sign] it wouldn't be enough because you'd

want another sign and haven't understood you already have the one most important sign

given through Jesus."[117] Even though God owed humans nothing, Keller preached that God

had already provided the definitive sign of God's love through what Jesus has done on the

cross. Even if a person had legitimate questions about the presence of the divine, Keller

reduced and then solved these questions though his evangelical message.

As another variation on this theme, Keller compared sin to addiction.

> All sin is addiction. Every sinful action becomes an addiction. It brings into your life
> a power that operates like addiction cycles. Alcoholism is a microcosm of how sin
> works in your life on a macro scale. There is an agent that promises satisfaction and
> then tolerance kicks in and you need more and more and more, and then denial
> kicks in such that your craving makes you rationalize and justify [having this agent]
> instead of thinking straight. [This agent] then destroys and dissolves your
> willpower, because you are trying to escape your distress with the very thing that
> brought your distress…. The Bible says that this is how sin works. Disobeying God
> will not bring freedom but will actually cause you to be enslaved by the sin behind
> your disobedience…. If you live for anything other than God, then the things of life

---

[116] S27, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 2)."
[117] S23, Keller, "Sin as Leaven."

242

will pale, and you will find yourself feeling empty no matter what you have in your life.[118]

Although this argument was meant to be intellectually appealing to his young urban professional audience, again Keller demonstrated his uncanny ability to perceive the particular struggles and challenges they faced. Keller chose emptiness as the chief result of sin, because a sense of emptiness could easily have been one of the chief inner problems that overworked young urban professionals were struggling with as they sacrificed so much of their time and energy to their steep career climb in New York City. The dire progression of "sin addiction" was universalized as the root cause of this sense of emptiness so that Keller could place the spiritual malaise of his young urban professional listeners into a manageable container that could be rehabilitated through the proper appropriation of what Keller was preaching.

Apologetic Engagement: License to Dismiss Contrary Views

Another strategy Keller used to increase the apologetic engagement of his preaching was to be dismissive of contrary views on the ground that they simply haven't understood his evangelical message clearly. Keller commented in one sermon that in "New York City, people are constantly saying to me, well I can't believe in this or that part of the Bible, because that's regressive… in other words, our beliefs come from our cultural moment. [Then] you don't have a real God. You have a God concept, who fits into your beliefs, moves into the existing patterns of your beliefs and agendas and goals." Rejecting parts of the Bible meant being out of touch with God, and "[i]f you're out of touch with God, then you're out of touch with reality."[119] By dismissing these detractors as out of touch with reality,

---

[118] S28, Keller, "Sin as Slavery."
[119] S69, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self."

Keller was impressing upon his listeners that they would only be truly in tune with their

lives in New York City if they responded positively to his evangelical message.

Keller was also dismissive of objections to the exclusivist salvation offered time and

time again in his sermons.

> The pagan mind like the modern mind believed there were many paths to god…
> Modern people are offended by the exclusive claims of the Gospel, wanting to
> believe instead that anyone who is good and moral can find God. Anyone who is
> really seeking God will find God. Your salvation is not simple and free. The only way
> you can say that there are many paths to get to God is to exclude grace and base it
> on works. [There is] a bias toward the strong and good and a bias against the bad in
> this scheme.[120]

Keller was offering a salvation that required a person to be humble and was based on

grace, allowing more room for people who were struggling. Interestingly, Keller did not

address objections to the exclusivist salvation head on, but deflected these objections on

the basis that modern people did not appreciate or understand its benefits. With this

deflection, Keller hoped to dismiss these objections enough to provide cover for young

urban professionals to believe in a doctrine of exclusivist salvation that their peers in New

York City would most likely have found intolerant and offensive.

Keller also dismissed those who objected to the call in his sermons to "convert"

people. Keller insisted these detractors were not being honest with themselves. Speaking

for one of these detractors, Keller stated

> 'I have a problem with Christianity. You say you believe in Christ, but why do you
> have to make other people believe in Christ? Believe what you believe but don't tell
> anyone else they aren't right.' There is a problem with your problem…. Jesus'
> resurrection is often seen as an immoral doctrine because it appears to legitimate
> Christianity over all other religions. The doctrine of the resurrection appears to be a
> triumphalistic doctrine. How very undemocratic of God, people think, without
> realizing that that idea itself is a local, almost tribal, western, enlightenment view. To

---

[120] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)."

think that all religions are equal, that is a faith position just as saying only one religion is the right one.[121]

Keller was saying that people who opposed their effort to convert people to the Christian faith were themselves trying to convert people to their view without even realizing what they were doing. With this argument that everyone was trying to convert people to their own faith position, Keller empowered young urban professionals to dismiss anyone who gainsaid Keller's call for them to try to convert others to accept his articulation of the evangelical faith.

Another species of this objection arose when Keller preached that "people around New York say that to have a claim to the truth is inherently exclusive, but that is a very white, Western, Enlightenment understanding of reality, that if you have the truth then everyone else is wrong." For Keller, making a truth claim was not the problem, because

truth claims cannot be avoided. The real question is which truth claims lead to the embrace of people who are different than you, and which truth claims lead you to scorn people you oppose as fools…. [I]f I build my name on being liberal, then I have to despise conservatives, and vice versa. If it's based on grace then I have no reason to feel superior to anyone. My identity is based on someone who was cast out for me.[122]

Keller's listeners were encouraged to pay no heed to the people who opposed his evangelical message because it laid claim to the truth. Unlike the truth claims made by others that led to discord, Keller offered them a truth claim based on God's grace, which he insisted led to unity. For any young urban professional in his audience who might be skittish about holding to the truth claims about God and salvation presented through Keller's preaching amid the number of other religious perspectives in New York City, Keller

---

[121] S65, Keller, "Witness."
[122] S64, Keller, "Community."

provided a rationale that would allow these young urban professionals to accept his truth claims and still be insulated from looking intolerant of other people's religious views.

In providing his young urban professional audience the rationale for dismissing people who saw making truth claims as intolerant, Keller explicitly referred to this view as a "very white, Western, Enlightenment understanding of reality." Keller's awareness that ideas and concepts are products of their surrounding racialized social order is refreshing. It also seems that Keller intended to distance his evangelical brand from these "white, Western, Enlightenment" ways of understanding reality. Even so, Keller did not explicitly disavow these "white, Western, Enlightenment" ways of understanding reality and the carefully crafted apologetic engagement Keller used in his sermons seems to use the rationalistic means of argumentation developed within this "white, Western, Enlightenment" perspective. In essence, through the use of his apologetic engagement, Keller allowed his evangelical brand to be a counter expression to a "white, Western, Enlightenment" reality that was still grounded in white culture.[123]

Another group Keller dismissed frequently on the basis that they had not understood his evangelical message were "postmoderns." "Postmodern people have a lot of trouble with the idea of sin, and yet we all know there is such a thing as evil. A lot of scholarly books are being written about evil and sin that are incoherent, because postmoderns don't like the idea of an absolute standard for right and wrong, because that has been used to oppress people into consolidating power for their group." Keller then indicated that

---

[123] Demonstrating partial awareness of the racialized social order, but still allowing his evangelical brand to be associated with the mechanisms that privilege white culture in late twentieth-century New York City, was a theme within Keller's preaching that is further identified and analyzed in the racial analysis of chapter four.

the essence of sin, which should be acceptable for postmoderns, is not doing bad things necessarily, but loving good things the wrong way. Everyone wants to be loved and thought of as desirable. What will you look to? Power, success, looks, good family, whatever you are looking to for that, you have gotten into bed with. Anything you look to besides God as your source of desirability becomes your lover god and an alternate to God and you are fatally attracted to it.[124]

For those postmoderns who still did not accept that this dynamic of idolatry was at work in their lives, Keller stated pointedly that "you won't know [these things are your idols] until you lose them. When you lose your looks and you start feeling despondent, that's your other god coming back to hack you… At the bottom of all those anxieties is a god who does not love you coming back to hack you to pieces."[125] Postmoderns then simply did not understand that rejecting sin as articulated in Keller's sermons led to this despondency and anxiety. Since no one wanted to end up feeling despondent and anxious, Keller then made it easy for his young urban professional listeners to dismiss these "postmodern" objections and accept Keller's preaching on sin as a means of addressing their own despondency and anxiety.

Keller used this same strategy to dismiss those who objected to the description of God in his sermons. Keller pointed out that "an awful lot of people" struggle with the concept that "God is a Father." Taking on a borderline mocking tone, Keller impersonated a person with these objections, saying "I don't like the biblical idea of God as Father. It's patriarchal. Fathers are hard and they are harsh and condemning and I want a sensitive and caring and forgiving God." Keller then explained that "Jesus is saying my father is not like that. For all his power and majesty, he's all of these things too. He is loving. He is

---

[124] S45, Keller, "God Our Lover." It is also interesting to note that Keller's characterization of "postmoderns" as a monolithic group harkens back to the earlier discussion of the use of caricatures to support his apologetic engagement.

[125] S45, Keller, "God Our Lover."

suffering. He is longing for your love. He loves you. Jesus brought together traits and attributes, the meekness and majesty of God, the power and tenderness of God, and said that's who God is."[126] Anyone who did not agree with the descriptions of God given in Keller's preaching was dismissed as being narrow and uniformed, because they were either unwilling or unable to grasp the full breadth of who God was. Here Keller was working to turn on its head the criticism that the evangelical faith was narrow and ignorant by portraying objections to the evangelical faith as themselves stemming from narrowness and ignorance. These clever reversals again were designed to enable young urban professionals to see that Keller's evangelical brand was first and foremost sensible, not at all the culturally insensitive set of religious beliefs associated with the Republican Right.

Apologetic Engagement: The Meticulous and Studious Expert

The final strategy Keller employed to enhance the apologetic engagement of his preaching was to present himself as a leading expert who was on par with other renown scholars. Frequently, Keller bolstered his points with references to scholars from a number of different disciplines. To support a claim that everyone has a particular worldview, Keller quoted from Robert Bellah.[127] Elsewhere, Keller again referred to Robert Bellah, alongside Robert Putnam, as the sources that support his statement that "sociologists have said that people are becoming more and more self-absorbed," even to the point that "in our culture we help the poor to feel better about ourselves."[128] From the fields of theology and historical studies, Keller credited Mark Noll and Richard Mouw as providing the building blocks for his assertion that God "risked" all of God's resources to enable humans to engage

---

[126] S60, Keller, "The Prodigal Sons."
[127] S65, Keller, "Witness."
[128] S69, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self."

in cultural activity that would make a "bigger and better world."[129] Showing his listeners a range and depth to his scholarly engagement, Keller sometimes took quotes from lesser known, but still prestigious scholars, particularly if they were in New York City. For instance, Keller relied on quotes from Andrew Del Banco, the Alexander Hamilton Professor of American Studies at Columbia University, to make the point that everyone must "imagine some purpose for life that transcends our tiny allotment of days," no matter whether a person is religious or not.[130] By quoting from these scholars, Keller wanted well-educated, young urban professionals to see him as a studious expert.

Keller further cultivated his image as a studious expert by quoting from established thinkers within the Christian world. He quoted C.S. Lewis as saying that "the idea that humans are searching for God is as nonsensical as mice seeking for the cat" to make the case that humans sought our own satisfaction before seeking God.[131] Dorothy Sayers' view that Christianity revealed eternal achievements that make "any earthly happiness trash" offered succor to Keller's assertion that we could not be completely good or happy apart from having faith in God.[132] Keller aligned his evangelical message with the views of important historical figures within the Christian tradition as well. From the Patristic Period, Keller imported Augustine into his preaching. [133] Key figures from the Reformation Period, such as Calvin, Luther, and Melanchthon, found their way into Keller's sermons too. Perhaps featured most heavily in Keller's preaching were the Puritans, particularly Jonathan Edwards, Richard Baxter, and John Owen,[134] and the historical revivalists, like

---

[129] S67, Keller, "Culture."
[130] S64, Keller, "Community."
[131] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 2)."
[132] S23, Keller, "Sin as Leaven."
[133] S67, Keller, "Culture."
[134] S23, Keller, "Sin as Leaven."

George Whitefield and Dwight Moody. [135] Contemporary scholars in the world of theology,

such as Stanley Hauerwas and N.T. Wright, were also quoted in Keller's sermons.[136] For

good measure, Keller drew quotes from major figures within the canon of western

literature, such as John Donne and Flannery O'Connor.[137] Embedding Keller's preaching

with these quotes from scholars in these various fields was intended to give his young

urban professional listeners the sense that Keller was a meticulous and studious expert.[138]

Keller then leveraged his image as a meticulous and studious expert to offer

criticisms of major historical thinkers within Western thought that the young urban

professionals in his audience would find credible. "Take away [Jesus' resurrection] and

Marx was probably right and Christianity probably is about ignoring the problems of this

world. Take it away and Freud was probably right and it is about wish fulfillment. Take it

away and Nietzsche was probably right to say it was for wimps. But they weren't right….

Easter makes this world matter."[139] Even when asserting that Jesus' resurrection made

these towering figures within of Western thought wrong, Keller inhabited his studious

expert persona by carefully demonstrating a measure of respect for them. Keller also

portrayed Jesus not only as the Savior, but also as the greatest intellect who had ever lived.

When preaching on the Parable of the Prodigal Sons, Keller concluded that through this

parable "Jesus is saying every thought the human race has had about how to connect to

---

[135] S71, Tim Keller, "Jesus at His Friend's Feast" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeeme*r Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, November 27, 2005), MP3 Audio.
[136] S64, Keller, "Community."
[137] S45, Keller, "God Our Lover."
[138] Based on his interview with Keller, Stafford reported that Keller considered "New York City to be a city of high achievers to whom … it made sense that a minister should be a scholar of ancient texts, exposing them to ideas and information beyond their experience," but also "someone who spoke their language." Stafford, "Keller Found Manhattan," 23.
[139] S63, Keller, "The City."

God, whether east or west, ancient, modern or postmodern era, in every religion, in all

secular thought, it's been wrong. Every human idea is wrong. Jesus is here to shatter all

existing human categories."[140] Jesus was presented as the crowning intellect of human

history, because of his ministry and his resurrection. Often contrasting his rendition of

what secular thinkers offered with what Jesus taught, Keller's sermons offered these young

urban professionals higher wisdom about ultimate matters than that of the great secular

thinkers of the modern age. While such statements may seem audacious, Keller had put his

young urban professional listeners in a position to believe these audacious claims were

credible by first establishing himself as a careful, studious expert on par with other well-

respected scholars.[141]

An example of how Keller used this meticulous, studious expert strategy to

demonstrate the credibility of his evangelical message to young urban professionals can be

found in his sermons series *The Faces of Sin*. Keller asserted that the biblical teaching of sin

was

> one of the strongest arguments for the truth of Christianity that there is…. Thoughtful people who had abandoned Christianity were pushed back and embraced the faith because there was nothing else except the religious concept of sin to explain this bad behavior…. If you get rid of the spiritual and religion, then you have to say we do evil and wrong because of biology, psychology, or sociology, but they don't cut it when facing evil… In the face of evil every other theory other than we are morally disordered falls apart. Only adherence to the tradition doctrine of sin will allow you to see reality for what it is.[142]

---

[140] S60, Keller, "The Prodigal Sons."

[141] One of the worship attendees commented that Keller's "style and intellect captivating and convincing …. On hearing Tim I was struck by the fact that this intelligent, rational, seemingly very modern, urbane man could talk this way about obedience, God's judgment, and, of course, Christ. He seemed to believe in the sort of things I had negatively associated with those dull and gullible Christians of my youth. He seemed to make so much sense." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 129.

[142] S23, Keller "Sin as Leaven."

Ever the careful, studious expert, Keller backed up this assessment by referring to the famous quote that has been attributed to Dostoyevsky, "If God does not exist, then everything is permissible."[143]

Keller continued his carefully worked out argument by commenting that "intellectually sin hides itself," because "we want to believe that ordinary people are all right."[144] Keller referred to the reaction of President Franklin Roosevelt, whom he labelled a "great humanist," when he learned of the atrocities of the Nazis in Europe during the Second World War. As the studious expert, Keller referred to "a source"[145] that indicated FDR could not make sense of such evil until he read "the writings of Søren Kierkegaard on original sin." Keller supplemented this idea by quoting C.S. Lewis' observation from *The Abolition of Man* that "a universal commonality" existed among "human civilizations as to morality." Everybody knew people were supposed to seek justice and equity, be generous with their possessions, tell the truth, and take nothing that did not belong to them. Keller asked rhetorically, "why do people know what to do, and even though people know the consequences of not doing it, people still don't do what they know they should do?" The Bible offered the most rational, sensible explanation: "sin is not just an action, but a power…every sinful action has a suicidal power over the faculty that puts that sinful action forth."[146] The layers of argumentation for the traditional Christian doctrine of sin as the cause for what had gone wrong with humanity was supported by careful references to

---

[143] Jean Paul Sartre famously attributed this quote to Dostoyevsky in his essay "Existentialism Is A Humanism" (1945). It is unclear that Dostoyevsky actually ever wrote these words, the closest to this quote coming in these words of the character Ratikin in *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880): "If the soul's not immortal, there's no virtue, either, and that means all things are lawful." Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Penguin Classics 1993, originally published in 1880).

[144] S21, Keller, "Sin as Predator."

[145] Keller did not provide the cite.

[146] S28, Keller, "Sin as Slavery."

scholars from different fields and historical periods. Keller presented himself like a studious expert so that he would be able to preach traditional Christian doctrines like sin and still retain credibility among his well-educated, young urban professional listeners.

Another example that demonstrates how Keller presented himself as a meticulous, studious expert is his sermon "Considering the Great Love of God." Keller began with the rhetorical question, "[w]here do we get the idea of a loving God?"[147] Then Keller proceeded to eliminate various options that did not make sense. He quickly dismissed the idea that a loving God was "common sense." Citing from Rudolph Otto's *The Idea of the Holy*, Keller pointed out that in ancient cultures the sense of the divine provoked fear or terror, rather than an image of a God who wanted to be "in a loving relationship with humanity." Next Keller shot down the idea that a loving God could have come from other religions. Neither Buddhism nor Hinduism led to a loving God, because "they don't even have a personal God at the center of their religion…. Islam has a personal God, but that personal God remains an almighty figure, removed from having, or even wanting, a loving relationship with humans." Nature also gave no indication that a loving God existed. Citing Anne Dillard's conclusion in *The Pilgrim At Tinker Creek*,[148] Keller posited that the "brutality exhibited within the way natural organisms feed on each other" precluded one from finding a loving God within nature. Having systematically demonstrated other explanations were inadequate through a careful use of sources, Keller was able to turn to the only possible explanation that made sense: people arrived at the idea that God is loving through

---

[147] S42, Keller, "Considering the Great Love of God."

[148] Anne Dillard spent several months living by a stream in the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia for the purpose of trying to live in step with nature. In 1973, Dillard wrote *The Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* to include her observations and conclusions from that experience.

knowledge of "God's wonderful deeds revealed in history through the Bible." In other words, Keller was making the case that without the Bible, human consciousness would "never have been able to conceive of a loving God."[149]

Such a direct claim for the Bible as the exclusive source of truth about God would have been jarring to his young urban professional listeners, most of whom were educated at prestigious universities that taught them to be wary of these kinds of exclusivist claims to truth. Yet through the meticulous crafting of his argument and his careful use of supporting sources, Keller put his young urban professional listeners in a position to find credible his otherwise jarring claim. Keller did not present this claim to them as a firebrand preacher, but in the image of an expert who could be relied on due to his extensive research and knowledge on the subject.

Apologetic Engagement: The Expert Clinician

To further enhance his image as an expert, Keller employed clinical language to describe the impact that believing in his evangelical message could have. The problem with the human heart, according to Keller, was a dislocation of the soul, and humans needed a "cure" for this dislocation.[150] To find the underlying spiritual causes of emotional or psychological distress, Keller offered his listeners "diagnostic questions." One of his commonly used diagnostic questions was "[w]hat circumstances, what things, what objects, what people, what relationships, what conditions, what things in your life, if you were to lose them, would make you feel like you didn't have a life left?" To Keller, this question revealed what a person's heart was truly set on. If the human heart was set on something

---

[149] S42, Keller, "Considering the Great Love of God."
[150] S26, Keller, "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)."

other than God, then a person would unavoidably experience a "negative emotion" such as fright, despondency, or anxiety at the thought of losing what the heart was set on. The "cure" prescribed by Keller for these "negative emotions" was to say to good things

> you are not my life, but Christ is my life. When you do that, you are shooting an arrow right into the heart of your negative emotion, and that arrow says, 'I am his beloved child in whom he is well pleased.' This transforms the despondency into disappointment. It doesn't get rid of the emotional experience, but relativizes it, makes the emotional life manageable.[151]

Using this clinical language allowed Keller to position his evangelical message as if it were a diagnosis, prescription or other therapeutic intervention given by medical doctor or a psychologist. While young urban professionals in New York City might have had a difficult time believing a preacher, doctors and psychologists were licensed and respected professionals whose credibility was not in doubt. Keller's clever use of clinical language allowed him to transpose the credibility for doctors and psychologists onto himself and his evangelical message.

Again, leveraging his image as an expert on par with a doctor or psychologist, Keller at times claimed more credibility than the members of these clinical professions. When it came to such personal problems as "excessive anxiety," Keller indicated that people needed to deal with "the problem under these problems." Without the "deep diagnosis" Keller offered in his sermons, these personal and social problems would never be adequately addressed.[152] Keller stressed that to build identity on anything other than God resulted in "psychological and sociological death."[153] In a sermon series entitled *Four Ways To Live; Four Way To Love*, Keller offered his evangelical message as providing for an inner peace

---

[151] S61, Keller, "Christ, Our Life."
[152] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief."
[153] S62, Keller, "The Gospel."

that surpassed what his listeners could receive through therapy or any other means.[154] Choosing a topic near and dear to young urban professionals, Keller referred to people who had actually achieved their ambition of becoming "stars." He recounted their testimonies that "the morning after the day they got famous, they woke up incredibly disappointed, because they didn't have the confidence or comfort or affirmation they were seeking through their success." Keller "diagnosed" their problem as "not dealing with the underlying problem," namely that that they did not seek their "confidence, comfort, and affirmation through a relationship with God" and it left them "feeling empty and miserable."[155] The way out of this was to avail oneself of "God's therapy" for sin and the feelings and behavior that emanate from it. According to Keller, God "like a good counselor" arrived in people's lives not to plunk a diagnosis on them, but to help them see for themselves what had gone wrong.[156]

When this therapeutic encounter with God occurred, Keller insisted that people changed. At one point, Keller reported his "blood curdled" when he heard a counselor express the opinion that people did not really change. Keller argued that the counselor's opinion denied the "central message of the Gospel" and made Jesus to be someone less than "who he said he was." Keller drew from his own experience to prove his point. In 1970, Keller became a Christian, but for two or three years after that he struggled with the same sins and negative thoughts and feelings he had before he became a Christian. Keller attributed these problems to a failure to understand that through repentance he could "release" the "implicit and untapped power of the Gospel" to bring "healing" to these

---

[154] S44, Keller, "God Our Friend."
[155] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief."
[156] S25, Keller, "Sin as Self-Righteousness."

problems.[157] If repentance from sin was based merely in a "fear of punishment," then repentance would not be able to cut out the entire "tumor" within the heart.[158] Anticipating what he perceived to be a therapist's counterargument, Keller refused to accept that to believe "sin has corrupted everyone" would "lead to low self-esteem." People with low self-esteem who came into God's presence "realize their low self-esteem was to a great degree self-absorption." They could only improve their self-esteem if something "gets them out of themselves…something bigger than themselves."[159] The "something bigger" was this healing therapeutic encounter with God.

More than any interventions of any other clinician, Keller's sermons could cause his young urban professional listeners to gain access to the healing of this therapeutic encounter. Keller projected himself in the image of a clinician who offered a cure for what ailed his listeners and offered healing at a deeper level than any other professional caregiver could offer. While this might sound far-fetched, by portraying himself as a clinician on par, or even above, other medical or psychological caregivers, Keller subtly coaxed his young urban professionals to consider these claims credible.

Keller's Place Within the Twentieth-Century Evangelical Pattern

While gaining credibility among these young urban professionals was undoubtedly the central reason why Keller crafted the apologetic engagement of his sermons, another purpose can also be inferred. The apologetic engagement section of the analysis of Keller's sermon content turned out to be by far the longest. In fact, the apologetic engagement of Keller's preaching took up approximately half of the content analysis in the foregoing

---

[157] S29, Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 1)."
[158] S30, Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 2)."
[159] S69, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self."

section. The explanation for this imbalanced treatment is simple. The content in Keller's sermons was itself unbalanced. Keller without question devoted the majority of the content in his sermons to developing, establishing, and refining the mechanisms and strategies that would support the apologetic engagement of his preaching. Certainly, spending some effort on crafting his apologetic engagement was warranted so that his evangelical message would seem "true" to highly educated, urbane young urban professionals. Nevertheless, to devote such a large amount of the content of his sermons to developing this apologetic engagement seems excessive for that purpose alone. After all, research suggested that many of the young urban professionals who attended Redeemer's worship services would have already been disposed to believing much of the evangelical message of Keller's sermons.[160] While Keller's apologetic engagement certainly reinforced the evangelical faith for these young urban professionals by making it sensible, Keller's exhaustive approach to countering virtually any objection imaginable seems like overkill.

In light of this, I suggest that Keller had another purpose in spending so much of his sermons on this apologetic engagement. A clue to this other purpose emerges when Keller described the task of the preacher in the New York City environment. Keller remarked that "the preacher has to anticipate questions and objections that would be raised by Jewish persons, socialists, Wall Street brokers, aspiring actors, gay rights activists, politically correct graduate students, and young second-generation Asian-American professionals."[161]

---

[160] In the composite of the young urban professionals attending Redeemer's worship services included in the last section of chapter two, research was provided that indicated that many of these young urban professionals had a religious background in evangelicalism before they started attending Redeemer's worship services. This research can be found at Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 79; Carnes, "Religions in the City," 11.

[161] Keller, "An Evangelical Mission," 32.

While some of those mentioned would have been included among the young urban professionals at the worship services at Redeemer, no available research supports the conclusion that everyone Keller was referring to was listening to his preaching. That means Keller perceived of an audience that was even larger than those who were gathered to listen to him on Sunday mornings. Given that Keller understood his role as the preacher to anticipate and address objections from such a large swath of the population in New York City, Keller was essentially taking on as his audience the secular and pluralistic culture of New York City itself. Keller aimed to do more than preach his evangelical message within this culture to the people who were interested in listening to it. Keller set himself up as an apologist for his evangelical brand to address all "secular people" in New York City.

Here Keller stepped into his place within a recurring pattern in twentieth-century evangelicalism in New York City. Against the secular and unbelieving forces of the city, Keller, like Straton, Fosdick, and Graham, sought to advance his evangelical brand as "the truth." Having served on the faculty at Westminster Theological Seminary, itself an institution devoted from its inception to defending the "true" Christian faith from secular and unbelieving forces, Keller was primed for this role. Repeatedly hammering away at such foes as evolutionary biology, secularists, and philosophical materialism in his sermons, Keller reified the conflicts with the liberal-modernists of the early twentieth century. Keller took up the mantle of defending the evangelical faith against these old adversaries to win a credible public image that would increase the cultural standing of his evangelical brand in New York City and beyond. Not only did Keller seek to increase the cultural standing of his evangelical brand by gathering in a sizable group of young urban professionals who would live it out, Keller advocated for an increased cultural standing for

his evangelical brand through a carefully crafted apologetic engagement that gave his sermons voice to speak to the secular and unbelieving forces of New York City as a whole.

The content of Keller's sermons solidified his ministry as the final iteration of the recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism in New York City. By crafting his preaching to gather in the largest group of young urban professionals possible, Keller demonstrated a unique take on the first defining characteristic of twentieth-century evangelicalism. Appropriate to his historical context and intended audience, Keller sought to increase the cultural influence of his evangelical brand within New York City and beyond much like his twentieth century predecessors. Twentieth-century evangelicalism also had a second defining characteristic that surfaced within Keller's ministry. To pursue ever-increasing cultural influence for their evangelical brands, Keller's predecessors in New York City, namely Fosdick, Straton, and Graham, targeted white, middle- to upper-classes as the key to gaining this cultural power. The effort to gather in this segment of the population compromised their evangelical brand by making it complicit with the prevailing racialized social order within their historical context. The racial and socio-economic composition of the young urban professionals for whom Keller carefully tailored his preaching revealed that Keller too privileged the white, middle- to upper-classes as the key to increasing the cultural influence for his evangelical brand. Although the foregoing chapter included some racial analysis, the continuation of the content analysis of Keller's sermons in the next chapter shows more fully how Keller, in crafting his preaching for white, middle- to upper-class young urban professionals, also made it complicit with the racialized social order of the late-twentieth century.

CHAPTER FOUR:

THE WHITENESS OF KELLER'S PREACHING

Keller's ministry as the final iteration of a recurring twentieth-century pattern within evangelicalism in New York City comes into sharp focus with the continuation of the content analysis of his sermons. The previous chapter focused the analysis of Keller's sermons on the first defining characteristic recurring within evangelical ministries throughout the twentieth century, namely the drive to increase the cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand within New York City and, through New York City, the entire United States. Keller pursued the greatest possible influence for his evangelical brand by crafting his preaching to amass a sizable base of young urban professionals. He believed these young urban professionals were the population with the most potential to effect cultural renewal by living out the evangelical message of his sermons and tailored his preaching to connect directly with them.

Based on the demographic material referred to in the last section of chapter two, the majority of these young urban professionals at Redeemer's worship services during the latter decade of the twentieth century were white and middle- to upper-class. This means that in essence Keller crafted his sermons for a predominantly white, middle- to upper-class segment of the population in New York City. Here the specter of the second defining characteristic that recurred throughout twentieth-century evangelicalism emerged. The second defining characteristic is the propensity of twentieth-century leaders to allow their evangelical brand to become complicit with the prevailing racialized social order. This complicity resulted from their effort to gather as much of the white, middle- to upper-class population under their banner as possible. The content analysis in this chapter investigates

how Keller's sermons repeated this pattern and ultimately reflected the prevailing

racialized social order of New York City. This racial analysis further demonstrates that the

presence of this second defining characteristic compromised Keller's ministry as a means

of addressing racial injustice, just as its earlier iterations had compromised the ministries

of Straton, Fosdick, and Graham. Without Keller's intention or awareness, his preaching not

only reflected the prevailing racialized social order, it actually contributed to reproducing

and reinforcing the late twentieth-century white supremacist culture in which whites

retained social privileges over other races even in the post-Civil Rights Act era.

Before delving into this racial analysis, I would like to offer a few words of clarity

and caution. The following content analysis of Keller's sermons reveals a race-sensitivity

that did not exist in the previous generations of evangelical leaders in New York City.

Whereas Straton explicitly heralded the virtues of "Anglo-Saxon values" as the salvation for

New York City and Graham demonstrated tepid support for civil rights by granting little

more than a token role for Martin Luther King, Jr. at his 1957 Crusade in Madison Square

Garden, Keller's preaching at times addressed racial injustice head on. This was a welcome

development within the twentieth-century trajectory of evangelicalism in New York City.

Nevertheless, the following examination of the content of Keller's sermons, aided by the

observations of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and other critical race theorists, does indeed unearth

the reality that Keller's preaching did more to reflect than dismantle the prevailing

racialized social order of the late twentieth century. Such a stark result was both surprising

and sobering. In part, I felt that way, because I too was a white preacher in New York City

who planted a church that primarily attracted white young urban professionals. My

analysis of Keller's ministry convicted me of my own failure to understand the means by

which the racialized social order was reproduced in the post-Civil Rights Act era. Most likely, if subjected to this same racial analysis, my own preaching in New York City would probably reveal the same complicity with, and contribution to, the prevailing racialized social order as Keller's did.

My research suggests that Keller was (and is) someone who considers racism to be a grave sin that causes wide-ranging injustice. Yet without an awareness of how the prevailing norms of the racialized social order were reproduced and reinforced within the late twentieth century, even well-intentioned evangelical leaders, like Keller, who sought to combat racial injustice could be inadvertently complicit in promoting the mechanisms that maintain the systemic advantages for whites over other races. This sobering reality becomes clear through the following continuation of the content analysis of Keller's sermons.

Individual Focus Obscures the Systemic Reality of Racism

The racial analysis of Keller's sermons commences with the observation that Keller focused his preaching on the individual. In "Sin as Unbelief," Keller exhorted his listeners that "sin versus godliness is matter of roots. They [roots] anchor in the soil and draw out the nutrients. Sin is putting your roots down into something other than God. You are either rooted in one way or rooted in another way."[1] Sin was presented as something within an individual heart that resulted from the individual choice to seek spiritual nurture from anyone or anything other than God. Keller also pulled justice toward an individualist perspective. Keller asked his listeners "what will make you a person who seeks justice? It won't be guilt ... pride ... these are both still inadequate, because this nurtures evil in the

---

[1] S24, Keller, "Sin as Unbelief."

heart of your moral life. This is a restraining, a jerry rigging of the heart. It hasn't changed

your heart and that doesn't produce people who do justice with radical sacrifice." Already

Keller cast the failure to seek justice in individual terms. He then proceeded to ask, "What

will change your heart? Beauty… Jesus took the cost of oppression on himself and that is

what sets you free. You needed [Jesus] to die for you, then you can appreciate the beauty of

what he did for you."[2] A person who sought justice was someone responding correctly to

what Jesus had done on the cross. The complexities of seeking justice within the layered

social systems of New York City were brushed away through the reduction of justice to an

individual's proper response to God's grace.

In another sermon, Keller indicated that the "Gospel creates a people who have a

complete upside down set of values, a whole alternate way of being human. Racial and class

superiority, accrual of money and power at the expense of others, yearning for popularity

and recognition, all these things are marks of living in the world and are the opposite of

people whose lives have been changed by the Gospel." Just when it looked like Keller might

be taking a more social perspective, Keller again directed attention toward a personal

response to what Jesus had done on the cross. "When you see what it cost to remove your

sin and the restructuring of your heart [occurs], then it leads to a reversal of values. You

don't look at other races the way you did before."[3] Without any reference to a social

structural perspective on racial and class superiority, Keller reduced these social ills to

individual actions produced by the individual heart that could only be changed through

---

[2] S66, Keller, "Justice" (sermon), *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 23, 2005), MP3 Audio.
[3] S62, Keller, "The Gospel."

"coming to Jesus."[4] Although Keller did articulate that evangelical faith should promote

changes in the social order related to race and class, the individual always preceded the

social in Keller's sermons.

Continuing this focus on the individual, Keller described the scene in Isaiah 60 as

one of social harmony. "[A]ll the races are getting along together and working together …

so there's not class conflict or race conflict. Why is our culture filled with problems in these

areas? Because our culture is not oriented toward bringing all the glory to God." Keller

viewed culture as a collective offshoot of how people went about their work.

> When profit becomes the ultimate and when making money becomes the ultimate, it
> eats away at delayed gratification. It eats away at thrift. It eats away at honesty and
> it destroys the very basis for economic productivity…. When you have an identity
> that is apart from your work, in knowing you are a special creation of God, then you
> will be able to do your work better and contribute to cultural renewal.[5]

Keller was clearly admonishing his young urban professional listeners to acknowledge that

if their ambition to "make it" in their careers in New York City was left unchecked, it could

produce nefarious social consequences. In line with his pro-work theology,[6] Keller

prescribed a remedy by which they could both pursue their career ambitions and promote

positive social consequences. They could establish their identity outside of their work as a

"special creation of God." This would then flow into work that contributed to making the

culture itself oriented toward God. Again, in Keller's preaching, the social order was

founded on the actions that flowed from each individual heart.

---

[4] Here Keller resembled Graham in that both men ignored the tradition of social ethical analysis inaugurated by such figures as Reinhold Niebuhr in favor of locating the genesis of social problems in individual actions. Dorrien, "Niebuhr and Graham," 144; Carnes, "Religions of the City," 8.

[5] S67, Keller, "Culture."

[6] Keller's pro-work theology is described in detail in the chapter three.

Keller's sermons continued to prioritize the individual over the social by advancing individual repentance as the solution to virtually any social problem within New York City. Keller exhorted that

> a new social order can be created, but hinges on being transformed by Jesus' grace. Inside the community of Jesus, work should not be the exhausting thing it is when it's self-creation… Inside the community of Jesus, people who outside can't get along at all, people of different races and classes…inside can. [The social order] is based on my life to benefit you…because you don't have to move ahead at the expense of others.[7]

This new social order could arrive in New York City when people had been transformed by God's grace. Ridding New York City of its social problems related to race hinged on personal repentance as a response to what Jesus has done. This individual repentance would then generate individual action necessary to overthrowing any social problem. The end result of personal repentance "is a completely changed life."[8] Keller also referred to the inner transformation that resulted from repentance as a "self-quake." "The result of the self-quake is to be sent out. We are made agents in that making of a new heaven and a new earth… [we] haven't lived up to it completely, but it's there as an inescapable principle."[9] Keller reinforced this "inescapable principle" by making sure his listeners understood that the point of "individual salvation is to create a new human community."[10] Because the individual preceded the social, the social order would change when individuals were changed through faith in Christ.

To be fair, Keller was not completely off base in preaching that individual action flowing from a repentant heart would contribute to the remedy of social problems such as

---

[7] S63, Keller, "The City."
[8] S30, Keller, "Healing of Sin (Part 2)."
[9] S69, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Self."
[10] S64, Keller, "Community."

racism. The mistreatment of racial minorities has obviously resulted in large part from the individual actions of bigots. Black evangelicals[11] of the mid-twentieth century, such as John Perkins, Tom Skinner, and Samuel Hines, clearly recognized this as well, including repentance for personal sins motivated by racial prejudice as part of their four-step method of achieving racial reconciliation.[12] Yet their four-step method did not stop with individual actions. The need to recognize and resist social structures of racial inequality featured prominently in the racial reconciliation method of these black evangelicals. While some white evangelicals embraced adding this social dimension to racial reconciliation,[13] by the late 1980s and 1990s, most white evangelical leaders had popularized an individualized formula for racial reconciliation that had dropped the components of acknowledging social systems of racial inequality and the confession of social sins.[14] The focus on the individual as the solution to social problems put Keller's sermons in line with this broader evangelical movement to individualize problems related to racial injustice.

This individualized focus within Keller's sermons, and, for that matter, the broader movement of evangelicalism of the late 1980s and 1990s, led to two significant problems. First, this individual focus obscured the ability of white young urban professionals to

---

[11] The label "black evangelicals," taken from Beulah, is used to differentiate different African Americans who subscribe to evangelical beliefs from the generic evangelical movement that has been associated with "conservative Christianity, whiteness, and a specific political affiliation and economic class." Beulah, "Soul Salvation," 13.

[12] Their four-step method of racial reconciliation is outlined and discussed in the last section of chapter one. For convenience, the four-steps are listed again here: (1) Individuals of different races must develop primary relationships with each other; (2) social structures of inequality must be recognized and resisted by all Christians together; (3) whites, as the creators and benefactors of the racialized society, must repent of their personal, historical, and social sins; and (4) African Americans must be willing to forgive whites individually and corporately, repenting of any anger and hatred they hold toward whites and the system. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 54-55.

[13] These evangelicals were Jim Wallis, Ronald Sider, Ronald Behm, and Tony Campolo, all of whom are aligned with the evangelical left brand prominent during the late 1960s and 1970s. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 59.

[14] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 67.

identify racism outside of individual actions. Through their ethnographic research during

the late 1990s,[15] Emerson and Smith discovered three "core cultural tools" that white

evangelicals used to make sense of race relations, namely accountable freewill

individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism.[16] These core cultural tools

corresponded to key evangelical beliefs, which these white evangelicals had transposed

from their religious context to make sense of their social context.[17] For example,

accountable freewill individualism deemed an individual had the independence to make

her own choices and was therefore accountable for her actions on an individual basis only.

Accountable freewill individualism had its genesis in the revivalist evangelical sentiment

that people were free to make a "personal decision" to have faith in Jesus.[18] Relationalism

meant that healthy relationships induced people to make the right choices when

interacting with people of other races. This followed the "bedrock, nonnegotiable belief" of

evangelicals that a "personal relationship with Christ" led to personal salvation.[19] Anti-

structuralism resulted as an extension of accountable freewill individualism and

relationalism. White evangelicals understood their faith in such individual terms that they

---

[15] To gather the ethnographic data that supported their racial analysis of evangelicals, Emerson and Smith conducted a national telephone survey of more than 2,500 using random sampling methods, which provided them with quantitative data. They traveled to 23 states to interview nearly 300 (mostly white) evangelicals, which provided them with a mass of qualitative, contextualized, and nationally representative data. They also drew from the General Social Survey, an annually conducted national sample of Americans that contains several race questions. Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 19.

[16] Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 76. Their concept of "core cultural tools" was adapted from the "cultural toolkit" developed by Ann Swidler in "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review* 51.2 (1986), 273-286. These core cultural tools are also discussed in the final section of chapter one. A review is provided here for the sake of convenience.

[17] William Sewell developed this concept of transposability, which holds that people not only deploy their cultural tools in the context in which they are learned, but transpose and extend them to new and diverse situations and contexts. Sewell,. "A Theory of Structure," 1-29.

[18] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 76.

[19] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 77.

were unwilling to acknowledge that social structures could have a negative influence on a person's ability to make the right choices or maintain healthy relationships.[20]

Taken together, these core cultural tools helped white evangelicals to make sense of their social context by prioritizing individual choices and action as the means to achieving right relationships among people of different races. While this was certainly an important component of pursuing racial justice, these core cultural tools also introduced a major blind spot. By making sense of the social context in individual terms, these same cultural tools obscured from white evangelicals the reality that sin and evil also existed outside of personal actions and within social structures themselves. When race emerged in human history, it formed a social structure that awarded systemic privileges to Europeans, who were deemed to be "white," over non-Europeans, who were deemed to be other than "white." Bonilla-Silva referred to this as a "racialized social structure," or "white supremacy for short," and pointed out that these racialized social structures became global and affected all societies where Europeans extended their reach.[21] This social structure that supported white supremacy has been present in the United States since its inception, both as a matter mandated by law and held in place by social practice.[22] The focus on the individual over the social in Keller's sermons further obscured the embeddedness of racism within social structures from his young urban professional listeners, many of whom were white evangelicals and therefore already disinclined to acknowledge the social reality of sin in any case.

---

[20] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 79.
[21] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 11.
[22] For a discussion of how U.S. immigration law reinforced the white supremacist social system, see Haney Lopez, "White By Law," 775-782. For discussion of how white domination has been socio-embedded through the validation of white European norms of ownership of people and land as established through legislation and case law from the 1800s onward, see Harris, "Whiteness As Property," 1710-1791.

The second problem with this individualized focus in Keller's sermons builds on the

first. By the 1980s and 1990s, the principle of racial equality had been overtly embraced by

mainstream U.S. culture, but the underlying racialized social system that privileged whites

over other races remained intact. Since the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 had shifted the law

from mandating to prohibiting discrimination based on race, the late-twentieth century

means of reinforcing and reproducing social privileges for whites became increasingly

covert and embedded in the normal operations of institutions.[23] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

identified these more subtle means of maintaining the racialized social order within late-

twentieth century U.S. culture as "color-blind racism."[24] These subtle mechanisms[25] of

color-blind racism, some of which surfaced in Keller's sermons, formed an impregnable yet

elastic wall that barricaded whites from recognizing the racial realities within U.S. culture

during the latter twentieth century.[26] By walling whites off from these racial realities,

---

[23] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 9.

[24] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 2. For a more detailed discussion of Bonilla-Silva's color-blind racism, see the introduction to this dissertation. Although this dissertation relies primarily on *Racism Without Racists*, the Bonilla-Silva corpus within critical race theory is much broader than this one text. For a few other significant examples of his work in this area, see Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *White Supremacy and Racism in The Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2001); Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty about Blacks without Sounding 'Racist,'" *Critical Sociology* 28.1-2 (2002), 41-63; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. "The Invisible Weight of Whiteness: The Racial Grammar of Everyday Life in Contemporary America," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35.2 (2012), 173-194.

[25] Bonilla-Silva refers to these mechanisms as "central frames." The three frames that appear in Keller's sermons were abstract liberalism, naturalization, and the minimization of race. For a description of these frames, see the "Overview of Relevant Scholarship" section of the introduction to this dissertation.

[26] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 47. The strength and elasticity of this wall results from using these frames in combination: abstract liberalism has trouble standing on its own without help from the minimization of race frame. Bonilla-Silva found that whites tend to mix and match as they see fit, depending on the arguments have been brought against them. The wall provided by these frames is formidable, because it supplies whites with a seemingly nonracial way of stating their racial views without appearing irrational or overtly racist. Color-blind racism does not rely on absolutes, as evidenced by the flexibility in the use of the frames, and therefore can make room for exceptions. Furthermore, stylistic elements of color blindness provide whites the necessary tools to get in and out of almost any discussion. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 48. Although not entirely relevant for purposes of this dissertation, it would be remiss not to point out that Bonilla-Silva does more than diagnose the deleterious societal effects of color-blind racism. He also offers five strategies to work against it. See Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 266-268.

color-blind racism then facilitated the establishment of "color-blind" policies within the government and other social institutions that emphasized the individual right to freedom and choice.[27] Whites were then able to reject racial discrimination as a critical factor in shaping the life chances of racial minorities. Whites could then explain their low socio-economic position as the result of a poor work ethic or making the wrong personal choices. A sobering implication of color-blind racism was that because the social privileges given to whites were reproduced subtly through the normal, everyday operations of institutions, people did not need to intend their actions to contribute to racial injustice for their actions to do so.[28]

Not only did the individual focus in Keller's sermons obscure the reality that racism existed as a sin within the social structure, it allowed the phantom of color-blind racism of the late twentieth-century to creep into his evangelical message. Abstracting racial minorities from the reality that they were systemically disadvantaged by the racialized social order of late twentieth-century New York City was one of the primary mechanisms of color-blind racism.[29] The individualized focus in Keller's preaching facilitated this mechanism of color-blind racism by allowing his white young urban professional listeners to reinterpret the lack of career and educational opportunity for racial minorities as something other than systemic racial injustice, such as their own sinful personal choices. Another powerful mechanism of color-blind racism was the minimization of race as a factor in the ability of racial minorities to succeed in career or education opportunities.[30] Through

---

[27] Antony W. Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: A Racial Formation Theory Analysis." *Sociology of Religion* 65.3 (2004), 198.

[28] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 9.

[29] Bonilla-Silva identified this mechanism as the "abstract liberalism" frame. For more description, see the "Overview of Relevant Scholarship" section of the introduction.

[30] Bonilla-Silva identified this mechanism as the "minimization of race" frame. For more description, see the

the individualized focus of Keller's sermons, his white young urban professional listeners could minimize the effects of race when considering the educational and job prospects available to racial minorities. Narrowing their focus to the individual over the social, the educational and job prospects for racial minorities could be viewed by Keller's white listeners as the result of the personal choices that racial minorities were free to make.

As a consequence of the individualized focus in his sermons, Keller's preaching reflected the spectral presence of color-blind racism by unwittingly sanctioning two of the common and subtle mechanisms used to reinforce the racialized social order of the late twentieth century. The individualizing focus of Keller's preaching then made his evangelical brand complicit with the racialized social order that protected whites from recognizing both their race-based social privileges and the race-based social disadvantages assigned to people of color. This is one of the reasons I ultimately argue that Keller's preaching, in spite of his best intentions, actually undercut the ability of his sermons to empower his white young urban professional listeners to recognize and combat systemic racial injustice in New York City.

Inattentiveness to Race As A Significant Cause of Social Privileges

In addition to an individualizing focus, Keller's sermons also displayed an inattentiveness to race as a significant cause of social privileges. This inattentiveness functioned as another symptom of color-blind racism within Keller's preaching that further compromised his sermons as a means of addressing systemic racial injustice in New York City.

"Overview of Relevant Scholarship" section of the introduction.

One example of this inattentiveness to race as a significant cause of social privileges was in Keller's sermon "Justice." Race was not mentioned at all in this sermon. Instead, Keller handled justice in terms of social class, indicating that "God is identified with the poor through Jesus' lowly birth." This gave the impression that the justice advanced through this sermon addressed primarily socio-economic inequality and that race was not necessarily a contributing, or even related, factor for those inequities. Furthering this emphasis on class over race, Keller preached that

> [i]f you don't love the poor and the marginalized, then you don't have a relationship with God. A deep, sensitive social conscience and a life poured out in deeds of service to others and especially the poor … is a deep sign of connection with God. How you care for the poor is the index of the condition of your heart.[31]

By tying justice to addressing the plight of the "poor," Keller implied that justice should be understood as a class issue. Making "care for the poor" the most direct indicator of whether a heart has been changed by God's grace permitted his young urban professional listeners to interpret justice as the rectifying of class disparities without considering the role racism had played in causing those disparities.

Keller exhibited a similar inattentiveness to race when preaching on what had gone wrong with culture. "All cultures are fallen, and all cultures oppress, because…every single culture puts in front of men and women certain objects and says if you don't have them, you're nothing…. Cultures function the same way in all times and places. They advance collective idols…. Modern culture says your worth is dependent on your individual assets, looks, career, money."[32] When providing a list of these collective idols, including such things as "assets," "looks," "career," "money," Keller cleverly aligned them with things on

[31] S66, Keller, "Justice."
[32] S62, Keller, "The Gospel."

which young urban professionals in New York City would place a high value. Notably absent from this list of collective idols was race. Given the prevalence of white supremacy throughout the history of the United States, it would not have been a stretch to include race, whiteness in particular, as one of these collective idols.

Recalling the definition provided in the introduction, whiteness has generally been thought of as an individual and collective identity that has assigned social power and standing to its possessor and has been associated with retaining power, decision-making, and problem-framing within the social context.[33] The inattentiveness to whiteness as a collective idol in Keller's sermon gave license to understand cultural oppression apart from racial dynamics. Keller's white young urban professional listeners were then authorized to look past the racial aspects of cultural oppression within their current context in New York City. The failure to explicitly include whiteness as a collective idol ushered color-blind racism into Keller's preaching, ultimately making it complicit with a significant means of preserving and reproducing the white supremacist culture during the late twentieth century.

In spite of this inattentiveness to race as a basis for social privileges, Keller's preaching did demonstrate that he was generally familiar with the concept of social privilege. For example, Keller chided "[d]o not fall for the Western myth that you are mainly the product of your own personal individual choices…. You are mainly the product of how you have been treated. You are mainly the product of your family."[34] To his credit, Keller obviously recognized that some people inherited a privileged social location not

---

[33] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 17.
[34] S64, Keller, "Community."

through their own merits but as a result of the family into which they were born. He bolstered this assertion by explaining that "whatever work we have put in to accomplish something or to earn something, we have been able to do so only through the abilities and opportunities that God has provided," meaning everything "we gain for ourselves is a gift from God." Keller refused to let his career-driven young urban professional audience believe that whatever they had achieved for themselves had come only from their own hard work. "You say, it's all a matter of my work. No, it's all a matter of your circumstances and God gave those to you." Keller hammered this in by telling these young urban professionals that if they had been born "on a mountaintop in Mongolia in the 12th century, then you wouldn't be doing so well no matter how hard you worked."[35]

In another sermon, Keller used an example even closer to home. He acknowledged that some "people in New York City are growing up in communities in which the schools and families and social systems leave them illiterate by age fourteen.... If you grow up in those neighborhoods, you are at an almost insurmountable disadvantage in the job market. You are ruined for the market, ruined for economic flourishing, locked into poverty for the rest of your life." Driving this line of thinking even further, Keller articulated that a "kid born in my family has about a 300- or 400-times greater chance for economic and social flourishing and just happiness in general than the kids in those neighborhoods.... This is proof of the enormously inequitable distribution of resources and opportunities in this world."[36] While Keller was undeniably on the right track, he still did not refer explicitly to race being a major factor that contributed to this social privilege for people born into white

[35] S68, Keller, "The Gospel and Your Wealth."
[36] S66, Keller, "Justice."

families. Referring to the children "in those neighborhoods" sanitized his illustration on structural injustice from the messiness of confronting the reality that social privileges are based in large part on race. Keller's preaching simply did not feature race as a significant factor in the production of social privilege.

As another example of the omission of race from social privilege, Keller recognized that he had received "unjust advantages," and that "if I do not share the unjust advantages that this world has dealt me with [people who have not received them], that is itself unjust.... Injustice is a yoke that is a system grinding them down. It's not enough to do individual charity. You have to address the social structures too."[37] Adding to his characteristically individualized focus, Keller acknowledged that social structures did facilitate or inhibit justice in themselves. Keller also demonstrated self-awareness that he occupied a social location as the result of unjust structural advantages. To his crowd of white, highly educated, young urban professionals, Keller's acknowledgement of his own "unjust advantage" would have challenged them to acknowledge that they too had received unjust advantages by virtue of their social location. By challenging these young urban professionals to confront their own social privilege, Keller was in this instance certainly pushing against the individualizing tendencies within white evangelicalism in the latter twentieth century. Yet the fact that Keller did not explicitly mention race as part of the reason for his own "unjust advantage" still permitted his white young urban professional listeners to stop short of factoring their race into the production of their social privilege.

The omission of race as a significant cause of social privileges essentially opened the door for these white young urban professionals to minimize, if not dismiss entirely, race as

---

[37] S66, Keller, "Justice."

a cause of social advantages. Minimizing the role of race in doling out the socio-economic circumstances and educational and career opportunities among different groups of people was one of the main "frames" within color-blind racism.[38] This frame was instrumental in the emergence of a specific form of color-blind racism within late twentieth century U.S. culture that Alumkal termed the "neoconservative racial formation project."[39] Racial formation theory was originally developed by Michael Omi and Howard Winant, who defined "racial formation" as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."[40] The key to this sociohistorical process was the concept of a "racial project," which connected "what race means in a particular discursive practice and the way in which both social structures and everyday experiences are racially organized, based upon that meaning."[41]

Alumkal's "neoconservative racial formation project" linked what race means in the late twentieth century (it was not a morally valid basis for treating individuals differently from one another) with a specific conception of the role of race in the social structure of that time (it can play no part in setting government policy).[42] The neoconservative racial formation project then allowed whites to subscribe to the illusion that all races had equal opportunity for advancement within the post-Civil Rights era of the late twentieth century. The blame for the lack of progress among racial minorities to move up the socio-economic ladder could then be placed on racial minorities themselves. Furthermore, the neoconservative racial formation project enabled whites to deny the need for any

---

[38] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 29.
[39] Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era," 201.
[40] Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation Theory in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*, Second Edition (New York: Routledge 1994), 55.
[41] Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation Theory*, 56.
[42] Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 16.

structural correction to the inequities that had been created by the overt racial

discrimination of the pre-Civil Rights Act era. Any attempts at such remedial measures as

affirmative action within employment and diversity quotas within the admissions for

higher education were met with vociferous objection.[43] To use Bonilla-Silva's language, the

neoconservative racial formation project allowed for the reinterpretation of racial equality,

freedom, and choice for the "racially illiberal goals" of blaming racial minorities for their

own low socio-economic status.

By omitting race as a significant factor in the cause of social privileges, Keller's

sermons mirrored the assumptions that fuel the neoconservative racial formation project.

In turn, his white young urban professional listeners at a minimum would not have been

challenged to see race as a key determinant of social privileges. Even worse, Keller's

preaching would not have checked those white young urban professionals who had

succumbed to assigning blame to racial minorities in accordance with the neoconservative

racial formation project. Just as with the individualizing focus, the inattentiveness to race in

the formation of social privilege caused Keller's sermons to reflect powerful mechanisms of

color-blind racism that reinforced and reproduced the racialized social order of white

supremacy in New York City, and the United States as a whole, during the late-twentieth

century.

Minimization, Concealment, and Legitimation of White Privilege

Making the omission of race within the context of social privileges that created

unjust structural advantages perplexing, if not pernicious, was the fact that Keller was

actually aware that his white young urban professional audience might have difficulty

---

[43] Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era," 201.

seeing themselves raced as white. Keller demonstrated his awareness of that difficulty by referring in his sermons to the reality that white culture was largely invisible to white people. Keller's acknowledgment that white culture existed was significant, because this demonstrated that Keller had a more sophisticated racial awareness than any of his evangelical predecessors, namely Straton, Fosdick, or Graham, in New York City.

Yet in spite of this racial awareness, Keller did not define for his listeners exactly what constituted white culture. Although "white culture," like "whiteness," is a prevalently used term that defies simple definition, critical race theorists have worked to provide some idea of what constitutes "white culture." Soong-Chang Rah associates white culture with such things as an "excessive individualism" that places pinnacle importance on the satisfaction of individual needs and achievement of personal aspirations.[44] Clarke and Garner point out that white culture emphasizes such values as self-reliance and personal responsibility over group solidarity and generosity.[45] Alumkal indicates that in white culture, the values of personal freedom and individual choice supersede all others, even to the extent that government assistance or social programs are seen as an unwarranted intervention into people's lives.[46] Taking these together, white culture prioritizes an individualistic approach to life in which individuals are free to follow their own personal ambitions and are responsible for working hard enough to achieve those ambitions. In other words, white culture fits closely with the values of the career-driven white young urban professionals who came to New York City to "make it" in their careers during the latter two decades of the twentieth century. Given the close connection between white

---

[44] Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*, 39.
[45] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 28.
[46] Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era," 198.

culture and the values of his target audience, Keller curiously did not make these attributes

of white culture explicit to his young urban professional audience.

Instead, Keller raised the concept of white culture and left it undefined. At one point,

Keller interrupted the flow of a sermon to ask this rhetorical question: "Can I say

something to you white people?" Then Keller proceeded to tell them that "an African

American Christian friend of mine" had said to him,

> [y]ou know…one thing that bothers me about you white Christians is you do not
> know you've got a culture…. You white people understand that there's black culture
> and there's Asian cultures and there's Latino culture but the way you do things is
> just the way things are done. You don't think of it as a culture, but it's a culture. It's
> not just the way all sensible people think. It's not the way all Christian people think.

Demonstrating that he had been reflecting on this insight, Keller pointed out that because

> white people have been in charge for so long… non-white people are way ahead of
> white people at being culturally sensitive. People who are not white figured out that
> things work differently in their culture than in white culture. They quickly learned
> that they had no choice but to figure out how things worked in white culture as well
> as in their own. If they didn't figure out how things worked in white culture, they
> wouldn't be able to get around.

Keller then confided in his white young urban professional listeners, "we, white Christians,

we don't know about culture. We tend to just think this is the way things are." He then

suggested that if white Christians were going to participate in bringing "shalom," the word

Keller was fond of using as a synonym for "justice" in his preaching, to "the social order in

New York City" and "in forming a church community that handles race and power

differently, we are going to have to listen more than we ever have."[47]

Keller reiterated these points in talks given at Redeemer Open Forums as well.

These open forums were not worship services. Instead they were opportunities for

---

[47] S64, Keller, "Community."

members of Redeemer to invite their friends to hear Keller speak on subjects relevant to their lives. Keller did not preach a sermon per se, but generally linked the topic at hand with aspects of the evangelical faith. The Open Forum talk "My God is a Rock: Listening to African American Spirituals" serves as a good example. Keller began with a reference to James Cone's *The Spirituals and the Blues* (1993). He took Cone's insights to mean that "white people are ignorant of black culture but that black people have had to be aware of white culture to get by." Keller then discussed that "cultural blinders prevented good, Christian, white people from recognizing slavery was morally wrong [in the Antebellum South]." Keller did not apply this same logic to the socio-economic disparities between the races in the late-twentieth century, opting instead to discuss the gospel in the spirituals composed and sung by the African slaves who had become Christians. "The Black gospel spirituals sung by the slaves is an expression of authentic Christianity…. The oppressors and the oppressed are both sinful. The slaves had no reason to feel that they were better than their oppressors because in the Gospel [of God's grace], everybody is the same…. Belief in this gospel gives us the opportunity for true unity among the races."[48]

Though Keller addressed race more directly in this open forum than in his Sunday sermons, he placed whites and blacks on equal footing from a spiritual standpoint. This opened the possibility of transposition for Keller's white evangelical listeners. As indicated earlier, Emerson and Smith used insights from cultural sociology and their own ethnographic research to determine that white evangelicals of the late-twentieth century

---

[48] S37, Tim Keller, "My God is a Rock; Listening to African-American Spirituals: An Open Forum" (talk), *Redeemer Open Forums* (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, May 3, 1998), MP3 Audio. For another example of an open forum talk in which Keller expresses that unity among races can be achieved through an authentic Christian faith, see S18, Tim Keller, "Is Diversity Possible?: An Open Forum" (talk), *Redeemer Open Forums* (New York City, April 30, 1995), MP3 Audio.

made sense of their social reality by mapping assumptions and values learned within their

religious context onto their social context.[49] This process of projecting a set of assumptions

or values learned in one context onto another has been labeled as "transposability."[50] By

placing whites and African Americans on equal footing spiritually, Keller enabled his white

evangelical listeners to transpose this equal footing between whites and African Americans

within the social context. Opening the possibility for this transposition again allowed

Keller's white listeners to assume that no one had social advantages based on their race.

Several critical race theorists have pointed out that the minimization of race as a basis for

social advantages made white privilege invisible to white people and therefore functioned

as a major vehicle of color-blind racism that reinforced white supremacist culture in the

late-twentieth century United States.[51] By minimizing race as a basis for social privilege,

Keller's talk effectively aided in masking white privilege to his white young urban

professional audience.

Furthermore, Keller's talk portrayed the white ignorance of black culture in the late-

twentieth century as more innocuous than the white ignorance of the Antebellum South.

The white ignorance of the past supported the institution of slavery, but the white

ignorance of the late-twentieth century led to little more than white people being out of

touch with black culture. At least, Keller gave the whites at these open forums that

impression, because he did not link contemporary white ignorance to any "cultural

---

[49] Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 76-77.

[50] William Sewell developed this concept of transposability, which holds that people not only deploy their cultural tools in the context in which they are learned, but transpose and extend them to new and diverse situations and contexts. Sewell, "A Theory of Structure," 17.

[51] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 26; Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 27, 34; Stephanie M. Wildman and Adrienne D. Davis, "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible" (1996), in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 2013), 798.

blinders" that inhibited white people from identifying systemic racism within the late-twentieth century. For instance, one late twentieth-century cultural blinder that resulted from white ignorance was the failure of white people to recognize their race as the basis for their social privileges. White ignorance also contributed to the neoconservative racial formation project in that the failure to recognize that white people were given structural advantages based on their race allowed them to attribute the lack of upward social mobility for racial minorities to their own poor choices and lack of work ethic. Not making these connections divested white ignorance of its insidious role in contributing to color-blind racism.

These references to the invisibility of white culture to white people in Keller's sermons displayed more race sensitivity than not only the previous generations of evangelical leaders in New York City, but also the late-twentieth century trends within U.S. evangelicalism.[52] While Keller's decision to include this white ignorance in his preaching is laudable, the recognition by whites that they were ignorant of white culture was not enough. To resist color-blind racism, whites had to further recognize that they were ignorant of their white privilege. White privilege was created through the privileging of norms associated with "whiteness," such as innocence, goodness, clearness, rationality, and efficiency.[53] Whites in the late-twentieth century were not taught to recognize the white privilege that accrued to them and generally did not see the world through a filter of racial awareness.[54] To use Peggy MacIntosh's metaphor, white privilege then functioned like an

---

[52] Emerson and Smith have noted that the popularized version of racial reconciliation among evangelicals in the late twentieth century focused more on achieving harmony between the races through individual actions than on addressing systemic factors such as the invisibility of white culture to white people. Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 67.

[53] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 26.

[54] Wildman and Davis, "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible," 798.

"invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks."[55] To put this in the context of white young urban professionals in the late-twentieth century New York City, white privilege gave them an invisible knapsack of social advantages when they applied for jobs, signed apartment leases, and otherwise pursued their ambition to "make it" in New York City. These social advantages would have included such things as their verbal and written communication styles, educational background, and general familiarity with the cultural assumptions of their white supervisors and professors. Because New York City forced these white young urban professionals to work strenuously to compete for jobs and to find affordable apartments, it would not have been obvious to them that they enjoyed any social advantages at all, let alone that they carried around with them this invisible knapsack of social privileges that racial minorities did not have.

When Keller encouraged these white young urban professionals to recognize that such a thing as "white culture" existed, it was a step in the right direction, but it did not expose their white privilege to them. The invisibility of white privilege to white people functioned as a motor that reinforced and reproduced the white supremacist culture of the late-twentieth century in the United States. Keller's preaching then reflected the color-blind racism of his era. Keller's sermons came close to pushing white young urban professionals to recognize how race generated structural advantages for them. Yet by neglecting to emphasize the importance of overcoming the ignorance of white privilege as well as white culture, Keller's evangelical message faltered. It did not empower these white young urban

---

[55] Peggy MacIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Peace and Freedom*, July/August (1998), 1.

professionals to identify and dismantle the color-blind racism within themselves and at the structural level within New York City.

For all the good strides made toward greater racial awareness, Keller's preaching on community offers another example of how his sermons aided in the concealment of white privilege. Keller stated that humans were made for three purposes, "to center our lives in God, to live in community with others, and to serve this world. When the relationship unraveled with God, then all other relationships unraveled. [This is] the root of the problem between cultures and races.... In a world in which everyone is self-centered then human community is ruined." Keller then emphasized that "God did not want to leave us in our ruins. God came to Abraham and wanted to make his family into a reconstituted humanity... through Jesus the Christ who will liberate us ... from sin and death itself." This reconstituted humanity was a "city on a hill, a new community of peace and love and justice, not just one nation or ethnic group, but all people and in every land.... All the relationships are back. When people are transformed, their communities are reconstituted...with a different pattern with respect to race and power."[56]

In describing the remedy for the problems with the "cultures" and "races," Keller made racial conflicts seem to be occurring among equals. Irrespective of racial location, everyone was equally at fault in the unravelling of the relationships with people of other races and equally empowered to restore those relationships. By placing all races on equal footing as to the cause and remedy of racial conflict, Keller's sermon concealed white privilege and the historical realities of white supremacism in the United States. Since all were equally at fault in causing racial conflict, this sermon implied that whites were not to

---

[56] S64, Keller, "Community."

blame any more than any other racial group for racial injustice in the late-twentieth

century. The oppressed were essentially put on par with the oppressors as to the cause of

and remedy for their oppression. The research of Tranby and Hartmann indicated that

abstracting the oppressed and the oppressors from their structuralist social realities to put

them on the same level as individuals allowed whites to push blame away from themselves

and toward African Americans for racial conflicts.[57] By placing the responsibility on all

people regardless of race, Keller effectively, but unknowingly and certainly unintentionally,

authorized white young urban professionals to blame African Americans and other racial

minorities for the racial conflicts that exist within U.S. culture.

Given that many of the white young urban professionals at Redeemer's worship

services were also evangelicals, authorizing them to place blame on African Americans and

other racial minorities for racial conflicts introduced a critical risk. In an article that

intentionally extended the research of Emerson and Smith to incorporate more principles

from critical whiteness studies,[58] Tranby and Hartmann argued that in the late-twentieth

century "white Anglo-American culture" had been elevated to normative cultural status and

became conflated with the promotion of national interests in the United States.[59] The

cultures of other races were seen as deviating from this normative cultural status and were

deemed inferior, sometimes even hostile to "good American values."[60] Tranby and

---

[57] Eric Tranby and Douglas Hartmann, "Critical Whiteness Theories and the Evangelical "Race Problem": Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47.3 (2008), 342.
[58] Critical whiteness studies is a subdiscipline within critical race theory that focuses on the social construction and implications of "whiteness." Anoop Nayak sees critical whiteness studies as offering a "radical intervention into race thinking" that holds the possibility to challenge and subvert the idea of whiteness as a universal norm. Anoop Nayak, "Critical Whiteness Studies," *Sociology Compass* 1.2 (2007), 739.
[59] Tranby and Hartmann, "Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*," 347. The normalization of white culture within U.S. society as a means of hiding white privilege and maintaining white supremacy is one of the central tenets within critical whiteness studies. Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 28.
[60] Tranby and Hartmann, "Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*," 347.

Hartmann further argued that the link between whiteness and cultural values was hidden from white evangelicals. As a result, they interpreted increased minority representation as a threat to the continued existence of the cultural homogeneity of the existing nation. White evangelicals completely filtered out the whiteness upon which this cultural homogeneity was predicated. They then transposed onto the United States the cultural vision of unity that held their white evangelical communities together.[61] White evangelicals of the late twentieth century then attributed racial conflict to the failure of African Americans and other racial minorities to properly assimilate within U.S. culture. By making all people regardless of race equally at fault for racial conflicts, Keller's sermons both concealed the role white privilege had in generating conflicts that resulted from systemic racial injustice and did not inhibit white evangelical young urban professional from attributing racial conflicts to the failures of racial minorities to become "good Americans." This concealment of white privilege and the normative status of white culture in the United States in Keller's sermons reflected vehicles of late-twentieth century color-blind racism.

Keller's sermons further reflected the normative status of white culture within U.S. society in the sources he used when preaching on justice. Instead of gleaning insights from Christian social ethicists, Keller appealed to the introspective work of eighteenth-century Puritans and contemporary evangelical scholars, all of whom were white, ultimately advancing individualized solutions to social injustice. For instance, at the end of a sermon on justice, Keller drove his point home with an insight from John Stott.[62] Keller reported

---

[61] Tranby and Hartmann, "Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*," 349.

[62] John Stott (1921-2011) was the rector emeritus at All Souls, Langham Place, in London, and traveled the world preaching and teaching. Stott is the author of more than 40 books, which have been translated into over 72 languages and have sold in the millions. He was also the framer of the Lausanne Covenant, a crucial organizing document for modern evangelicalism. David Brooks, "Who Is John Stott?," *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 2004, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/30/opinion/who-is-john-stott.html.

Stott as saying, "[i]n a world of injustice, I could never believe in God without the cross."

Keller said Stott makes that statement because "only Christianity does not let God be

immune from injustice…. Jesus took the cost of oppression on himself" to set people free

from the pride that inhibited them from acting justly. "[Jesus] died for you…and it takes

away your pride, because you needed him to die for you…grace leads to justice." Keller then

deduced that when "you can appreciate the beauty of what [Jesus] did for you" in taking on

the oppression of sin and death, the appreciation of this grace would lead to the elimination

of pride and the desire to promote justice.[63] The introspective insight of Stott was

expanded so that the cure to the problem of pride within the individual heart doubled as

the cure to such social problems as racial injustice.

On the topic of racism itself, Keller turned to George Whitefield and Jonathan

Edwards. In preaching on the Book of Jonah, Keller exhorted that "[w]e're all Jonah…what's

wrong with our hearts because we all have the same problems." The problems in the hearts

of the worship attendees at Redeemer were aligned across time and place with Jonah's

heart. God had called Jonah to preach a message of repentance to the Ninevites. Jonah

refused, because he "hated the filthy, creepy, pagans…. Jonah was a racist and turned the

nationalism of his country into an idol." This racism was recast as "the sin of self-

righteousness," because it set people up "to believe they are better than others based on

externally identifiable characteristics." To remedy this self-righteousness at the root of

racism, Keller referred to a statement from Whitefield that "it takes two things to be a

Christian, you have to repent of your sin, but also must repent of your righteousness."

---

[63] S66, Keller, "Justice."

Keller further quoted Whitefield as saying that "the last sin to be plucked out of the heart is self-righteousness."[64]

From Jonathan Edwards, Keller drew the observation that "sin turns the heart into fire and there is never enough fuel to satisfy a fire, the more fuel you put into a fire, the more it needs." Applying this principle to racism, Keller indicated that "holding to racist views necessitates more racist actions."[65] To quench this fire and quell this racism, Keller's listeners had to appropriate into their lives the evangelical faith included in Keller's sermons, which was designed to be in line with the insights of Whitefield and Edwards. The systemic analysis of Christian social ethicists such as Emilie Townes or Traci West on the problem of racial injustice was wholly absent. By privileging the individualized focus of these white males over the systemic analysis of racial injustice advanced by Christian social ethicists, many of whom are of color, Keller prioritized a white cultural focus.[66] Keller's prioritization of white culture through his choice of sources fortified one of the tropes of color-blind racism that white culture functioned as normative within the diverse society of New York City and the rest of the United States.

Normalizing Cultural Narratives of White Young Urban Professionals

Much like the invisibility of white culture, Keller interestingly seemed to be aware at some level of the cultural hegemony that resulted from normalizing white evangelical culture within the pluralistic and racially diverse context of late-twentieth century New

---

[64] S25, Keller, "Sin as Self-Righteousness." Keller did not provide the source for these quotes from Whitefield.

[65] S28, Keller, "Sin as Slavery."

[66] Another way Keller prioritizes white culture is by choosing to use references from popular culture that were made for a white audience. For instance, in a sermon on justice, Keller did not refer to the actual social problems in New York City that were the result of racial injustice. He instead translated injustice as a breaking of shalom, a rupture of human flourishing, and illustrated this concept by referring to the collapse of the banks during the Great Depression that almost caused George Bailey (Jimmy Stewart) to "end it all" in *It's a Wonderful Life*. See S66, Keller, "Justice."

York City. When preaching on culture, he explicitly stated that "God does not want cultural homogeneity." The logic behind that assertion was that "certain cultures have certain strengths…. We need what all the different cultures bring…for the flourishing of the entire human race." Yet where there was good, the bad was always close behind in Keller's sermons. "Every human culture is susceptible to making their unique contribution the ultimate. Then it becomes an idol that tyrannizes" the people of that culture.[67] Keller preached an evangelical faith that both affirmed various cultures for their good contributions and sought to convert those cultures from the impulse to turn that good contribution into an idol.

Anticipating criticism for suggesting another culture needed to be "converted," Keller cited Lamin Sanneh on the effect of Christianity on the culture within Africa.[68] Before Christianity, the "baseline cultural narrative" within Africa was that "the world is filled with spiritual forces, especially evil spiritual forces." According to Keller's understanding of Sanneh, "their tribal religions didn't address these evil spiritual forces" and "secular culture mocked their cultural views" of spirituality. Only Christianity gave Africans "the answer they were looking for. Christianity helped Africans become renewed Africans, not remade Africans." As a result, "Africa went from 9% to 50% Christian in 50 years."[69] Although raising a host of other questions,[70] the relevant inference that could be drawn from Keller's

---

[67] S67, Keller, "Culture."

[68] The specific source used by Keller is Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 2003). Lamin Sanneh was on faculty at the Yale Divinity School as the Professor of Missions and World Christianity from 1989 until his death in 2019.

[69] S67, Keller, "Culture." Keller was unclear with respect to whether he was quoting directly from Sanneh or paraphrasing.

[70] For instance, is Africa really so culturally monolithic in their views of spirituality? Is not the view of Africa as a cultural monolith itself a product of western colonialism, thereby calling into question any observations based on such a global statement of African culture? How much does Sanneh himself subscribe to this view or does this African cultural monolith appear as a result of Keller's interpretation?

use of Sanneh's observations was that Keller did seem to be aware that even as he wanted

his listeners to make efforts to convert New Yorkers to his evangelical brand, his listeners

also needed to guard against a hegemonic imposition of white evangelical culture as part of

their efforts to convert others.

As was the case with white privilege, Keller again remained silent as to how his

listeners could work against a hegemonic advance of white evangelical culture within New

York City. Critical race theory offers a practical suggestion: To work against the hegemonic

spread of white evangelical culture, Keller's white listeners first needed to realize that

white culture had become normative. For instance, African American communities held

values of family and responsibility the same as whites, but tended to have greater

attachment to group solidarity and generosity. Alternatively, whites were more focused on

self-reliance and work ethic, particularly the white young urban professionals who came to

New York City to devote themselves to their careers.[71] Taken as the societal norm, white

values of self-reliance and personal responsibility became the currency by which African

Americans could be stigmatized. As a result, alternative values of group solidarity and

generosity were not interpreted as simply a different approach to social relationships, but

as moral flaws of laziness and irresponsibility that were then ascribed to African

Americans. Keller did not make that connection between the normalization of white culture

and the stigmatization of racial groups who held alternative values, leaving his white young

urban professionals without the perspective needed to prevent themselves from

hegemonically imposing the values of white culture when trying to convert New Yorkers.

Keller's preaching then again stopped short of empowering these white young urban

---

[71] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 28.

professionals to overturn systemic racial injustice and instead reflected another aspect of late-twentieth century color-blind racism.

Another danger resulted from the recasting of racial injustice, and other social problems, as a matter of individual shortcomings. Keller's sermons left his white young urban professional listeners with the impression that remedying racial injustice was not an end in itself, making it instead a means by which they could achieve their own spiritual healing. In a sermon on sin, Keller indicated that in New York City "so many don't live with other people who see you day in and day out. Other people have to help you see sin, because your sin is crouching and looks much less worse to you than it actually is, only others can help you with it." Here Keller elevated the individual as the reason for community. Being in community with others was not viewed as promoting spiritual health because it raised one's social consciousness, but rather because the community improved the individual's ability to identify her own sin.[72]

Although Keller did not apply this logic directly to the sin of racism, it stands to reason that Keller wanted his young urban professional listeners to be in community so they could better identify the racism latent (or active) within their individual hearts. Again, Keller's individualizing focus that prompted the reinterpretation of social problems in individual terms was on display. Keller did not focus his white young urban professional listeners' attention on recognizing how white privilege and the normalization of white culture within the society of New York City affected the kind of community these white young urban professionals were even able to have with people of color. Recalling Myatt's

---

[72] S21, Keller, "Sin as Predator."

criticism from the previous chapter,[73] Keller presented living within the diverse social context of New York City not as an opportunity for these white young urban professionals to recognize their own white privilege. Instead, he presented living in this diverse social context as a means of enhancing their own spirituality. By reducing community to a means of exposing an individual's sin, Keller's preaching again reflected the tendency within late-twentieth century white evangelicalism to make sin a matter within the individual heart.[74] Not expanding sin to exist within social structures as well, Keller's sermons did more to reinforce the racial status quo than they did to help white young urban professional to identify and dismantle the structural advantages and disadvantages bestowed on people by virtue of their race.

The normalizing of white culture in Keller's sermons ratcheted to another level when considering how Keller characterized the baseline cultural narrative of New York City. "Baseline cultural narrative" was a term that Keller used when quoting Lamin Sanneh to denote the default cultural assumptions that applied to everyone within a particular culture.[75] The baseline cultural narrative then functioned as a universal description of the common beliefs and values that applied to everyone in that culture. Although Keller did not use this term directly with respect to New York City, Keller nevertheless constructed a baseline cultural narrative for New York City through his preaching.

---

[73] Myatt commented that Keller presented New York City both as a mystical path toward greater spiritual renewal for young urban professionals by objectifying New York City and the people of color living there as a means to the individual spiritual growth of these mostly white and evangelical young urban professionals who had been migrating from the suburbs into New York City. Myatt, "God in Gotham," 190.

[74] Bartholomew also concluded that within Keller's sermons, "sin … is an intensely private and internal matter." Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 99.

[75] S67, Keller, "Culture." Keller quoted Sanneh as saying that the "baseline cultural narrative" in Africa was that "the world is filled with spiritual forces, especially evil spiritual forces."

The construction of this baseline cultural narrative began with the assertion that New York City "is based on the principle of self-creation .... You have the opportunity to create your own self through performance and accomplishment, which of course by the way is the central cultural narrative of New York City, self-definition, self-creation through performance and accomplishment." The phrase "central cultural narrative of New York City" signaled that Keller was indeed constructing a baseline cultural narrative that applied as a default to everyone who lived and worked in New York City. The downside of this baseline cultural narrative was that it created "a social order based on ... exhaustion and oppression... You're always driven and restless and nervous.... The poor are trampled because at the very least you aren't going to notice the problems of other people and the poor if you're exhausted all the time."[76] With this take on New York City, Keller was undoubtedly addressing the challenges facing the migratory population of white young urban professionals who had come to New York City to chase their career ambitions.

In tailoring his preaching to address the needs and circumstances of his young urban professional audience, Keller elevated their experiences and challenges into the baseline cultural narrative for New York City as a whole. As the young urban professionals at Redeemer's worship services were mostly white, the elevation of their cultural narrative to the status of baseline cultural narrative was not race-neutral. The cultural narrative of self-creation developed in Keller's preaching described the reality for white young urban professionals who had the education, social connections, and racial privilege to open up a range of lucrative and prestigious career opportunities. In other words, it was not the universal or default cultural narrative, but a cultural narrative particular to white young

---

[76] S63, Keller, "The City."

urban professionals. For many people who lived in New York City during the late-twentieth century, particularly those who lived in the neighborhoods that leave children illiterate up to the age of fourteen, to use an example taken from one of Keller's sermons, the same range of lucrative and prestigious career opportunities were simply not available. Whatever the cultural narrative might be for these other New Yorkers, it could not possibly be one of self-creation as Keller had described it. Elevating the particular cultural narrative of white young urban professionals to the position of baseline cultural narrative for all of New York City normalized the cultural privileges and values of the white young urban professional population.

Normalizing their cultural narrative undercut Keller's attempts in other sermons to disabuse his white young urban professional audience of the myth that their career achievements were the result of their hard work alone. Instead, it authorized the evaluation of racial minorities in New York City according to the white young urban professional cultural value of "self-creation through performance and achievement." The formation of the baseline cultural narrative of New York City in this fashion further strengthened Keller's connection to white young urban professionals through his preaching, but in so doing Keller's preaching was compromised. It reflected the color-blind racism of the late twentieth century in the United States. The elevation of their cultural narrative to normative status empowered these white young urban professionals to see "the slate of privileges based on race as wiped clean," leaving people of all races on an equal playing field when competing for coveted career advancements in New York City.[77] The

---

[77] Clarke and Garner, *White Identities,* 30. Clarke and Garner indicate that not only were high achieving white people generally inclined to believe that the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 had wiped the slate of racial privileges clean, but they often displayed deep resentment when forced to confront the ongoing presence of their racial

currency for determining who achieved those coveted career advancements was

"performance and accomplishment," and racial location had nothing to do with it. Thus, this

baseline cultural narrative contributed to the illusion that career advancement resulted

exclusively from individual efforts and achievements. If racial minorities did not enjoy the

same career advancement as these white young urban professionals, it was not their racial

location that held them back, but rather deficiencies in their own effort and work product.

Once again, Keller's sermons provided a window through which the neoconservative racial

formation project, a powerful apparatus of late-twentieth century color-blind racism, could

shine.

The Black-White Binary Within Keller's Sermons

Up to this point, the racial analysis of Keller's sermons has demonstrated that

Keller's preaching reflected the color-blind racism of the late-twentieth century through

various means, namely the focus on the individual over the social, inattentiveness to race as

the cause of social privileges, the minimization, concealment, and legitimation of white

privilege, and finally the normalizing of the cultural narrative of white young urban

professionals in New York City. In his effort to draw in as many young urban professionals

through his preaching as possible, and therefore secure maximal cultural influence for his

evangelical brand on the grand stage of New York City, Keller's sermons reflected color-

blind racism, the prevailing mode of reproducing and reinforcing white supremacist

culture during the late twentieth century in the United States. The foregoing racial analysis

---

privileges. For instance, when affirmative action policies in hiring and college admissions removed their
structural privilege for being white, some white people nursed their indignation with a counternarrative that
being raced as white was actually a detriment. While it was not clear the white young urban professionals in
Keller's audience shared this resentment, the fact that this was a prevalent sentiment among high achieving
white people during the latter twentieth century ups the stakes a bit when elevating their particular cultural
narrative.

has then allowed for Keller's ministry in New York City to be situated as the closing act within the larger twentieth century evangelical drama. Nevertheless, a complicating factor emerged during the foregoing racial analysis of Keller's sermons. This complicating factor resulted from the predominance of the black-white binary within Keller's sermons and the reality that many of his young urban professional listeners were of Asian descent.

The "black-white binary" is an unstated paradigm that comprises the historical framework for critical race theory and has become a contested issue in the field of contemporary critical race studies.[78] The black-white binary dictates that people grouped as "blacks," particularly African Americans, constitute the prototypical and quintessential minority group. In this paradigm, Asians, Native Americans, and Latinx groups are minorities only insofar as their experience and treatment can be roughly analogized to those of blacks. The black-white binary paradigm allows theorists to streamline the analysis of what is an inveterately complex social reality and has been quite useful in the understanding of relations between whites and blacks throughout U.S. history.[79] The weakness of the black-white binary is that it risks marginalizing other racial minority groups who do not fit cleanly within the racial categories of "black" and "white."[80] This

---

[78] Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 75.

[79] Goto also attributes the black-white binary with the benefit of inspiring solidarity and empathy for African Americans in that the black-white binary offers a clear depiction of what African Americans have had to experience within the racialized social order of the United States. Courtney T. Goto, "Beyond the Black-White Binary of U.S. Race Relations: A Next Step in Religious Education," *Religious Education* 112.1 (2017), 38.

[80] Further complicating matters, the racial category of "white" is itself constantly shifting to include different people groups at different times. Nell Irvin Painter refers to this phenomenon as the "enlargement of American whiteness" and tracks it through four major phases within U.S. History. The first "enlargement" occurred during the Antebellum period, during which whiteness expanded to cover white males of any faith or socio-economic status through the removal of religious and property requirements for voting. The second enlargement came about in the late nineteenth century as the "new" immigrants from southern and eastern Europe facilitated the passing of "old" immigrants from northern and western Europe (primarily Germans and Irish) as white. The New Deal and World War II brought the third enlargement as the "new" immigrant groups and their descendants were melded into the growing white middle-class of the post-war years on the basis that they were not characterized as "black." The final enlargement occurred with the end of legalized

binary analysis conceals the mosaic of racial diversity with the United States, representing

diverse groups of people imprecisely as a monolith and limits discussions of race and

racism by ignoring the experience of people who are neither black nor white.[81] Although

not all critical race theorists share these critiques of the black-white binary,[82] many

contemporary studies of race subscribe to some form of a differential racialization thesis

instead of the black-white binary.[83] While some scholars within the field of evangelical

studies, such as Russel Jeung, Antony Alumkal, and Kathleen Garces-Foley, have adopted

methods of analysis that reflect differential racialization theses, the black-white binary

continues to loom large within twentieth century studies of evangelicalism in the United

States.[84]

The black-white binary also looms large in Keller's sermons. For instance, when

Keller spoke at Open Forums on the subject of racism, he gave a talk on the subject of

African American spirituals and addressed the historical relationship between whites and

---

segregation and the revision of national immigration laws that, in Painter's assessment, propelled African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx Americans into an expanded middle class that excludes only "poor blacks." See generally Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 2010). See also Hamilton Cravens, "Book Review: The History of White People by Nell Irvin Painter," *The Journal of Southern History* 77.4 (2011), 895-896.

[81] Goto, "Beyond the Black-White Binary," 34-35. Other problems result from the black-white binary as well. For instance, this paradigm can weaken the solidarity between blacks and other oppressed racial groups, because it relies on a binary analysis of "whites and one other" and hides the grim truth that whites, as the dominant racial group, have pitted minority groups against each other to their mutual detriment. Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 78-79.

[82] For an eloquent and impassioned defense of the black-white binary, see Roy L. Brooks and Kirsten Widner, "In Defense of the Black-White Binary: Reclaiming a Tradition of Civil Rights Scholarship" (2010), in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 499-510.

[83] Differential racialization theses maintain that each subordinate group has been racialized in its own individual way according to the needs of the dominant group at particular times in history. Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 77.

[84] Emerson and Smith, Tranby and Hartmann, Sutton, Dochuk, and Marsden all either explicitly employ or otherwise default to the black-white binary in their twentieth-century evangelical studies. See Emerson and Smith, *Divided By Faith*, 11; Tranby and Hartmann, "Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*," 342; Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, xii; Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt*, Kindle Location 291; Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism,* 2.

African Americans in the United States.[85] When Keller brought up the invisibility of white

culture to his white listeners, it was his "African American Christian friend" who helped

him see that reality.[86] One of the most pointed examples Keller used when preaching on

Jesus' death on the cross involved an African American woman who had discovered that

Jesus had been "lynched ... by a corrupt political system."[87] When Keller cited sources who

were not white males, they tended to be African American or African males.[88] When Keller

referred to race explicitly in his sermons, he tended to leave it open-ended by referring to

"the races" without the appearance of prioritizing the white-black social relationship.[89]

Even so, Keller did not explicitly focus on Asian Americans or any other racial group

outside of whites and African Americans in his sermons. The lack of explicit references to

people who were not raced as white or black coupled with the explicit references to whites

and African Americans leads to the supposition that Keller's sermons handled race

primarily from the perspective of the black-white binary.

Needing to track the content given in the sermons, the racial analysis of Keller's

preaching in this chapter then proceeded according to the confines of the black-white

binary as well. Pegging the racial analysis to the black-white binary worked well in tracking

the effect of Keller's preaching on his white young urban professional listeners. In the

---

[85] S37, Keller, "My God is a Rock"; S79, Tim Keller, "Ain't That Good News: What African-American Spirituals Teach Us About Heaven and Hell" (talk), *Redeemer Open Forums* (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, March 22, 2009), MP3 Audio.

[86] S64, Keller, "Community."

[87] S66, Keller, "Justice."

[88] For instance, Keller referred to Howard Thurman (S79, Keller, "Ain't' That Good News."), Martin Luther King, Jr. (S37, Keller, "My God is a Rock"; S56, Tim Keller, "The Healing of Anger" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 17, 2004), MP3 Audio; S73, Tim Keller, "Injustice: Hasn't Christianity Been an Instrument for Oppression?" (sermon), (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City, October 15, 2006), MP3 Audio; James Cone (S37, Keller, "My God is a Rock), and Lamin Sanneh (S67, Keller, "Culture.").

[89] S18, Keller, "Is Diversity Possible?"; Keller, "Community"; S62, Keller, "The Gospel."

previous sections of this chapter, ample sources within critical race theory helped to elucidate how Keller reflected the mechanisms of late-twentieth century color-blind racism. The reflection of color-blind racism within Keller's sermons served to mask white privilege to his white young urban professional audience and normalized their cultural narrative. As a result, Keller's sermons did not empower white young urban professionals to recognize these mechanisms of color-blind racism and strive for racial justice within the social structures of New York City.

That would have been the end of this racial analysis had Keller's audience consisted only of white and middle- to upper-class people. While whites were the largest group to attend the worship services at Redeemer Presbyterian Church during the 1990s, people of Asian descent were not far behind. Research suggested that in the mid-1990s, whites comprised just under two-thirds (58.2%) of worship attendees while just over one-third (34.9%) identified as Asian, and of those who identified as Asian, more than one-third (38.6%) identified as Korean by birth.[90] Zylstra noted that the Asian population at the Redeemer worship services consisted largely of second- or third-generation immigrants whose parents belonged to a wave of Koreans and Chinese who came to New York City in the 1980s, most of whom settled in Flushing, Queens. Redeemer Presbyterian Church presented a good option for second-generation Koreans in particular as many of their parents raised them in the Korean Presbyterian tradition.[91] Zylstra further indicated that the presence of so many Asian Americans at Redeemer's worship services surprised Keller,[92] further strengthening the thesis that Keller prepared his sermons primarily to

---

[90] Bartholomew, "Reviving Orthodoxy," 77.
[91] Zylstra, "Life and Times."
[92] Keller's surprise was evident in the following quote from his interview with Zylstra: "For the first year,

connect with the white young urban professionals who had moved to New York City to pursue career ambitions.

Current critical race theory and available research does not support conclusive analysis about the effect Keller's sermons had on his Asian American urban professional listeners. Even so, it is worth mentioning that Alumkal's theoretical approach regarding the potential effect that Keller's sermons could have on second generation Asian Americans. Second generation Asian Americans tend to embrace the evangelical platform of "one identity in Christ," according to Alumkal, to symbolically escape from the problematic aspects of their racial status as either a model minority or perpetual foreigner by invoking evangelical Christianity as an alternative locus of identity. Perceiving of themselves as "outsiders" with respect to the dominant white society, they have created social worlds— be they churches or campus fellowships—where they can share a common understanding as "insiders" with respect to the Kingdom of God. While second generation Asian Americans have nearly completely absorbed the formal doctrine as well as informal styles and practices of mainstream evangelicalism, they have only selectively absorbed contemporary evangelical understandings of race. While white evangelicals affirm "all are one in Christ" in response to ambivalent feelings about their dominant racial position, Asian Americans affirm the same discourse in response to discomfort associated with being "model minorities" or "perpetual foreigners," infusing the discourse with a new set of meanings.[93] It could be then that the second generation Asian Americans who attended the worship

---

when you walked in the door and looked up front, you saw two faces. You saw me and you saw the pianist, who was Chinese. Next thing you know, about six months later, I look out there and I see white people and Asian people, and I'm wondering why. It could be that at some subliminal level, people walked in the door, they saw themselves up front, and they felt a little more welcome." Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[93] See Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 84-96.

services at Redeemer reinterpreted Keller's evangelical message to suit their cultural

location, setting aside the racial difference between them and the white young urban

professionals to align with them on the basis of being a common evangelical minority in

New York City. While Alumkal's theory offers a potentially applicable conceptual

framework for the effects Keller's preaching might have on his second generation Asian

American listeners, more ethnographic research would need to be conducted to test this

theory.

Nevertheless, the high proportion of Asian Americans present at the Redeemer

worship services warrants their inclusion in the racial analysis. Explaining why so many

Asian Americans came to Redeemer's worship services is beyond the scope of this study.

This is not to minimize the importance of an endeavor to explain why such a high

percentage of Asian Americans attended Redeemer's worship service.[94] Further research

into the question of why so many Asian Americans attended worship services at Redeemer

Presbyterian Church, which Keller had geared to connect with the migratory, white, young

urban professional population during the late twentieth century and into the early twenty-

first century, might offer significant new insights into the place of Asian Americans within

---

[94] Several scholars have called for further research into how Asian Americans fit within U.S. evangelicalism. Alumkal indicates that a lot of the studies of second-generation Asian American evangelicals focus heavily on ethnic culture and assimilation with little analysis of race. Other studies give significant attention to race but fail to sync their racial analysis with racial ideologies in the larger evangelical subculture in the United States. Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era," 208. Garces-Foley notes that Asian American influence on U.S. evangelicalism has been marginal at best, even though Asian Americans have been one of the fastest growing groups within U.S. evangelicalism since the latter decades of the twentieth century. Garces-Foley laments that little research has been conducted to assess the theological or sociological distinctives among Asian American evangelicals. Kathleen Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission,* AAR Academy Series (New York: Oxford University Press 2007), 47. Yong comments that in general evangelical theology in the United States has not even begun to wrestle with the importance of ethnicity and race, and an Asian American evangelical theology has yet to "get off the ground" even at the beginning of the twenty first century. Amos Yong, "The Future of Evangelical Theology: Asian and Asian American Interrogations," *Asia Journal of Theology* 21.2 (2007), 378.

U.S. evangelicalism. Even so, given the scope of this racial analysis, the focus must be on the extent to which Keller's sermons reflected the prevailing racialized social order that perpetuated white supremacy in the late twentieth century. In the previous sections of this chapter, it has already been determined that color-blind racism, the primary means of reproducing and reinforcing white supremacist culture in the late twentieth century, was present in Keller's preaching. The effect this had on Keller's white young urban professional listeners has also been evaluated based on critical race theory developed within the black-white paradigm. Now this racial analysis briefly investigates the effect of this color-blind racism within Keller's sermons on the Asian American young urban professionals in attendance. To adequately engage in this investigation, further consideration must be given to how Asian Americans have been raced within late-twentieth century U.S. society and their place within the black-white paradigm.[95]

The racial position of Asian Americans within the U.S. social system of the late twentieth century has been defined in large part by assigning them "model minority" status.[96] As the model minority, Asian Americans[97] are perceived of as quiet, industrious,

---

[95] This does not mean that racial analysis of Asian Americans in the United States must be done within the black-white paradigm. This study seeks to fit them in the black-white paradigm, because that is the approach to race taken in Keller's sermons. For examples of differential racialization theories that allow for the analysis of Asian Americans outside of the black-white binary paradigm, see Kim, "Racial Triangulation," 105-138; Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era," 195-213; Russell Jeung, *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2005).

[96] People of Asian descent were not considered the "model minority" until the latter decades of the twentieth century. Robert Chang notes that during the first half of the twentieth century, Asian Americans were seen as "sneaky, obsequious, or inscrutable." Robert S. Chang, "Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship: Critical Race Theory, Poststructuralism, and Narrative Space" (1993), in *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, eds. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 470. Hsu indicates that until they became the model minority, Asian Americans were derogatorily considered the "yellow peril" as nativists feared that Asian Americans were taking away their job opportunities and ushering hostile foreign influences into the United States. Hsu, *Good Immigrants*, 237.

[97] The use of the term "Asian American" to group people of Asian descent into a pan-ethnic monolith is itself an aspect of how Asian Americans have been racialized during the late twentieth century in the United States. Jeung defines "Asian American" as a large umbrella group that has primarily been used as a political category. People referred to as "Asian Americans" have a dramatic range of ethnic ancestries, class backgrounds,

with stable family systems, and high educational aspiration and achievement.[98] For all its ubiquity within public perception, critical race theorists generally consider model minority status to be a flawed racial category. First, model minority status is considered a myth, because it does not even apply to all Asians within the United States. Some Asian groups have not risen up the socio-economic ladder much since their immigration.[99] Second, the Asian groups who have experienced the kind of economic success envisioned in the model minority myth tend not to be emulated as a model by whites. Often these Asian groups are considered to be too successful, working as "soulless, humorless drones whose home countries create the economic turmoil" that affects the livelihood of many members of the dominant race in the United States.[100] Thus, the model minority myth persists as a racial category within the United States not so much because of its descriptive accuracy, but rather for its function as a tool of oppression by which white supremacy can be maintained.[101]

---

cultural traits, and racial experiences. Grouping this diverse population under the pan-ethnic umbrella term "Asian American" creates a platform for a dastardly efficacy within the U.S. racial system. Traits such as "model minority" or "perpetual foreigner" can be more easily applied across the entire population of Asian Americans without having to bother about the particularities of intra-group distinctions. These traits have been applied to Asian Americans without attention to these distinctions anyway, but the emergence of this pan-ethnic grouping made the application of these race-generated and race-reinforcing traits more seamless. Jeung, *Faithful Generations*, 3.

[98] Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 91; Hsu, *Good Immigrants*, 237. Chang traced the origins of this model minority status as far back as a 1966 article in *U.S. News and World Report* in which Chinese-Americans were depicted as working hard and depending "on their own efforts—not a welfare check—in order to reach America's 'promised land.' ... [They] pulled themselves up from hardship and discrimination to become a model of self-respect and achievement in today's America." Chang, "Toward An Asian American Legal Scholarship," 470.

[99] Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 91. Bonilla-Silva lists the following as examples of Asian groups who have not experienced the economic success the model minority myth ascribes to them: Vietnamese, Cambodians, Filipinos, and Laotians. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178-179. Chang cited generally to the same Asian groups as Bonilla-Silva, indicating that during the 1990s the poverty rates among segments of the Asian American population, namely the Laotians, Hmong, Cambodians, and Vietnamese, were higher than the national poverty rate. Chang, "Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship," 471.

[100] Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 92.

[101] Chang noted that the model minority myth has been a tool of oppression in two major ways. First, the model minority myth gives license to deny the existence of present-day discrimination against Asian

304

Identifying the racial location of Asian Americans within the black-white paradigm demonstrates how the model minority myth has functioned as this tool of oppression. The immigration patterns of people from Asia during the latter twentieth century have prompted an adjustment to the "black-white" understanding of racial politics in the United States.[102] Bonilla-Silva has indicated that the earlier twentieth century biracial order has evolved into a complex and loosely organized triracial stratification system. By the latter decades of the twentieth century, the "racial totem pole" within U.S. society placed "whites" at the top and the "collective black" at the bottom with an "honorary white" group in between.[103] The honorary white group included people of pan-Asian descent, particularly Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, and Chinese Americans.[104] Thus, the honorary white racial group includes those Asian Americans who have been assigned model minority status. Within this tri-racial adjustment to the black-white binary, honorary whites

---

Americans and the present-day effects of past discrimination. Second, the model minority myth legitimizes the oppression of other racial minorities as it can be weaponized by the dominant race to blame other racial groups for their lack of economic success. Chang, "Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship," 471.

[102] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 177. Bonilla-Silva also recognized that the changes in immigration patterns of people from Mexico and Latin America have had an impact on the "black-white" understanding of racial politics in the twentieth-century United States. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178. As the subject of my racial analysis in this study is Asian Americans, the enormous effect of this influx of Latinx immigrants on U.S. racial politics is not addressed. For an assessment of the effect of the influx of both Latinx and Asian American immigrants within U.S. racial politics, see Hsu, *Good Immigrants*, 236-237.

[103] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178. Bonilla-Silva differentiates these groups on the basis of a "pigmentocratic logic" that relegates people with darker skin to the bottom of the racial order and lifting those with lighter skin to the top. Within this scheme, whites include "traditional whites, new white immigrants, and totally assimilated white Latinos, lighter skinned multi-racials, and other subgroups" and the collective black are "blacks, dark-skinned Latinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Filipinos, and Laotians." Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178. Although Goto registers criticisms with Bonilla-Silva's tri-racial scheme, she also classifies it as a specific version of a "middleman" theory adjustment to the black-white binary. The middleman theory retains the black-white binary paradigm, but opens up space in the middle for those who do not fit into the "white" and "black" racial categories. Goto, "Beyond the Black-White Binary," 41. The common element within general middleman theory and Bonilla-Silva's tri-racial theory is the retaining of the racial hierarchy established by the black-white binary in which whites are at the top and blacks are at the bottom. Kim, "Racial Triangulation," 106.

[104] Bonilla-Silva also recognized that light-skinned Latinx, Asian Indians, and Middle Eastern Americans could also be included in the honorary white racial category. Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 178.

function as a tool of oppression for maintaining the white supremacist culture in two major ways. First, they serve as tokens within various organizations to allow the majority white population to claim they are not racists.[105] This token status had the secondary effect of causing the honorary whites to align themselves with the values of white culture in an effort to gain status. Second, whites then hold up this token racial minority up as an example to the other racial minorities, ultimately as a justification of the view that it is the lack of effort, rather than their race, that is preventing the other racial minority groups from attaining educational or career success.[106]

The Asian American young urban professionals attending Redeemer's worship services fit within model minority status. Their educational background and career trajectory mirrored that of the white young urban professionals.[107] The whites would have been able to perceive that the race of their Asian American counterparts had not held them back from upward social mobility, attributing their career success to their hard work and individual efforts. The educational achievements and career advancements of these Asian Americans could also function as examples to other racial minorities of what could be accomplished if they worked hard enough. These Asian American young professionals functioned as honorary whites who supported the perceived validity of the neoconservative racial formation project, which held that no race had any structural advantage over any other when it came to educational and career opportunities. Keller's

---

[105] Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 179; Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 81. Although referring to this token status as "honorary whiteness," Frank Wu describes it as functioning similarly to the description offered by Delgado et al. See Frank H. Wu, "The Moral Dilemma of Honorary Whiteness: A Comment on Asian Americans and Affirmative Action," *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 20.1 (2015), 25-30.

[106] Delgado et al, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, 81; Wu, "Honorary Whiteness," 28.

[107] The last section of chapter two contains the demographic profile information that aligns the Asian Americans with the whites in attendance in terms of their educational background and social class.

sermons already opened the door for white young urban professional to hold to the neoconservative racial formation project,[108] and the presence of these Asian American young urban professionals in worship opened that door even farther.

Furthermore, the high proportion of Asian Americans present at worship hid the elevation of white culture, particularly the cultural narrative of white young urban professionals, to normative status. These Asian Americans were trying to "make it" in their careers as well. Even though many of them came from Queens instead of migrating from other parts of the United States,[109] it would have been easy to overlook that fact as these Asian Americans deployed the same values of self-reliance and individual effort in pursuit of their career goals as their fellow white congregants. These Asian Americans assumed the role of a model minority and therefore validated that the values of white culture were normative for everyone in New York City. Racial groups who did not subscribe to these values could be perceived of as not simply different, but out of step with the "right way" to manage their lives. Keller's sermons had already contributed to universalizing white culture,[110] and the Asian American young urban professionals present in the audience served as the honorary whites who reinforced this trope of color-blind racism.

Because Keller's preaching followed the black-white paradigm, I had to fit the Asian American young urban professionals at the Redeemer worship services into the racial hierarchy established by that paradigm as honorary whites. While this was necessary given that the focus of this study has been on how Keller's preaching mirrors the mechanisms of

---

[108] The neoconservative racial formation project, and how Keller's sermons opened the door for his white young urban professional listeners to hold to it, is described in greater detail in the second section of this chapter.

[109] See Zylstra, "Life and Times."

[110] The discussion of the elevation of white culture to normative status within Keller's preaching is described in greater detail in the third and fourth sections of this chapter.

color-blind racism, it is also important to note that a full analysis of the effect Keller's

sermons on the Asian Americans at Redeemer worship services would be more complex.

For instance, Alumkal has noted that during the 1990s second generation Asian Americans,

particularly of Chinese and Korean descent, in the metro New York area reinterpreted

evangelicalism to suit their cultural vantagepoint.[111] They tended to embrace such

evangelical platforms as "one identity in Christ" to symbolically escape from the

problematic aspects of their racial status as a model minority by invoking evangelical

Christianity as the locus of their identity. In spite of nearly completely absorbing the

doctrines and practices of mainstream evangelicalism, they have only selectively absorbed

contemporary evangelical understandings of race.[112] Given that most of the Asian American

population at Redeemer worship services during the 1990s was second-generation, it could

very well be that they explicitly rejected their racial position as a model minority by

infusing Keller's preaching with new meanings that suited their own racial location in line

with Alumkal's conclusions. That thesis would need to be tested and is just one example of

the complexity involved in a full-blown analysis of the racial dynamics in play among the

Asian Americans in attendance at Redeemer worship services.[113]

---

[111] From the spring of 1994 through fall of 1996, Alumkal interviewed attendees and was a participant observer at the worship at the Chinese Community Church, an independent, evangelical congregation, and the Korean Presbyterian Church. Both of these churches are located in the New York metropolitan area near a public university campus and hold worship services for the second generation in English as well as services in the first language for the first generation immigrants. Alumkal interviewed 24 people in each congregation, including church leaders and members, each interview lasting between one and two hours. Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 19-22.

[112] Alumkal, *Asian American Evangelical Churches*, 84-96.

[113] Other examples (without limitation) of scholarship that complexifies the study of the racial dynamics for the Asian Americans at Redeemer are as follows: (1) Asian Americans often function as a "religious model minority" within evangelical campus ministries and churches, exemplars of evangelical piety and action to which even other white evangelicals should aspire (Rebecca Y. Kim, *God's New Whiz Kids: Korean American Evangelicals on Campus* (New York: NYU Press 2006); Kim, "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals," 19; Rudy V. Busto, "The Gospel According to the Model Minority?: Hazarding an Interpretation of Asian American Evangelical College Students," *Amerasia Journal* 22:1 (1996), 140); (2) the individualistic

Further studies into these racial dynamics would undoubtedly be beneficial. As indicated earlier, twentieth-century evangelical studies has been largely informed by the black-white binary. However, Asian Americans are a growing force within U.S. evangelicalism and have developed their own unique concerns and strategies that emanate from their particular racial location.[114] A comprehensive study of the racial dynamics involved for the Asian Americans present at Redeemer worship services could complement the studies of such scholars as Elaine Ecklund and Sharon Kim and further contribute to the understanding of the racial location of Asian Americans within evangelicalism apart from the black-white binary. Yet further examination of these racial dynamics are outside the purview of the current analysis. Through this racial analysis, I have tracked the content of Keller's sermons according to the black-white binary, because that was the approach to race exhibited in Keller's preaching. Given the parameters of this racial analysis, the Asian American young urban professionals present at Redeemer worship function as honorary whites, by virtue of their model minority status, who reinforce the mechanisms of color-blind racism already on display in Keller's sermons.

approach and focus on personal well-being within white evangelicalism has had a profound influence on the perspective of Asian American evangelicals (Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 49-51; Jeung, *Faithful Generations*, 116); (3) second-generation Asian Americans tend to join white evangelical churches not necessarily because they want to assimilate, but to escape from familial tensions that result from their not fitting in with the first generation Asian evangelical church of their upbringing (Carnes, "Religions in the City," 20; Yong, "Asian American Interrogations," 377); (4) second-generation Korean American evangelicals often use their faith to negotiate civic responsibility as well as create a racial and ethnic identity that is both distinct from the first generation churches of their parents and mainstream evangelical churches (Elaine Howard Ecklund, *Korean American Evangelicals: New Models for Civic Life* (New York: Oxford University Press 2008); Sharon Kim, *A Faith of Our Own: Second-Generation Spirituality in Korean American Churches* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press 2010)).
[114] Garces-Foley, *Crossing the Ethnic Divide*, 47.

Keller's Evangelical Brand Compromised

The foregoing content analysis of Keller's sermons reveals that in spite of his best intentions, Keller's preaching was compromised as a means of addressing systemic racial injustice in New York City. An initial assessment of Keller's preaching makes that pronouncement seem both unfair and unfounded. Keller demonstrated more willingness to address racial injustice through his preaching than any of his twentieth-century evangelical predecessors in New York City. In the fundamentalist period of the early twentieth century, Straton overtly embraced white supremacy, advocating for the values of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism as the vehicle for saving New York City from lapsing into social chaos. Fosdick tacitly endorsed the prevailing racialized social order of the early twentieth century by insisting the worship at Riverside Community Church conform to his race- and class-coded sensibilities. Riverside Community Church then attracted white professionals who shared his race- and class-coded sensibilities and essentially made the worship at Riverside Church a de facto "whites only" space. Operating in the mid-twentieth century, Graham's support for civil rights for people of color was largely symbolic at the 1957 Crusade in Madison Square Garden. After inviting Martin Luther King, Jr. to offer the opening prayer, Graham's preaching was silent on the evils of segregation and did not explicitly endorse the civil rights movement led by King.

Unlike Straton, Fosdick, and Graham, Keller's preaching in late twentieth-century New York City identified racism as a grave social evil. To some degree, Keller even recognized the covert character of the color-blind racism of the post-Civil Rights Act era. He alerted his young urban professional audience to the reality that "white culture" existed. He encouraged the whites in attendance to grow in cultural sensitivity by learning from the

people of color in the community at Redeemer Presbyterian Church and in New York City in general. A recurring theme in Keller' sermons was that racial prejudice had no place within the evangelical faith. Even though Keller's preaching framed race within the confines of the black-white binary, Keller still demonstrated a level of racial awareness unprecedented among his evangelical predecessors in New York City. Indeed, my socio-historical analysis of Keller's ministry and content analysis of Keller's sermons indicate that on the surface he made great effort to offer his evangelical brand as a means of combatting racial injustice in New York City.

Yet using the insights of critical race theory throughout the foregoing chapter, I employed a deeper analysis of the content of Keller's sermons and discovered that his preaching contained the mechanisms of late twentieth-century color-blind racism without Keller's intention or awareness. In the post-Civil Rights Act era of the late twentieth century, racism became more clandestine. The racialized social system privileged whites over other races not through segregationist legislation, but by hiding the social advantages given to whites through the mechanisms of color-blind racism. These mechanisms function to deny race from being a factor in the educational and career advancement of various groups, emphasizing instead individual choice and personal effort as the key determinants of socio-economic success. Keller's sermons reflected these mechanisms of color-blind racism in four significant ways. First, Keller's focus on the individual obscured the systemic realities of racism. Second, Keller's sermons included an inattentiveness to race as a significant cause of social privileges. Third, Keller's preaching minimized and legitimated white privilege by remaining silent on the systemic advantages created through the

normalization of white culture. Fourth, Keller elevated the cultural narratives of white young urban professionals to be the baseline cultural narrative for all of New York City.

The presence of these mechanisms of color-blind racism within Keller's preaching linked his evangelical brand with the prevailing racialized social order of late twentieth-century New York City. As a consequence, the connection between Keller's evangelical brand and the prevailing racialized social order ultimately undercut Keller's explicit calls to combat racial injustice in New York City. Not only did this result in Keller's evangelical brand being compromised as a means of addressing systemic racial injustice, Keller's evangelical brand was compromised without him even being aware that this had happened. This discovery was unsettling, because it serves as a wake-up call to all of us white, evangelical male pastors that our good intentions in preaching against racial injustice are not enough. Our preaching will be just as compromised as a means of combatting racial injustice as Keller's was unless we pay attention to two critical factors. The first factor in compromising Keller's evangelical brand was that insights from critical race theory did not have a significant enough impact on his preaching. Through gaining a better understanding of critical race theory, we white evangelical pastors will be more able to identify the mechanisms of color-blind racism and guard against reflecting them inadvertently in our preaching.

The second factor in compromising Keller's sermons was that he chose to craft his evangelical message for the migratory population of young urban professionals who were coming to New York City in the late twentieth century and were mostly middle- to upper-class whites. By choosing these young urban professionals as the target for his evangelical brand, Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church became a final iteration of a

recurring pattern in which evangelical ministries in New York City during the twentieth-century were shaped by two defining characteristics. Keller's drive to achieve the largest possible cultural influence for his evangelical brand was the expression of the first defining characteristic. The second defining characteristic surfaced because Keller believed that young urban professionals were the key to increasing the cultural influence for his evangelical brand. To gather in as large of a crowd of these young urban professionals as possible, Keller unwittingly allowed his preaching to become complicit with the prevailing racialized social order of the post-Civil Rights Act era in the twentieth century. For all of us ambitious, well-meaning, white evangelical pastors, the lesson here is clear. Our ministries can fall into this same pattern unless we are vigilant against allowing that to happen. To prevent our evangelical ministries from extending the recurrence of this twentieth-century pattern into the twenty-first century, we must carefully interrogate our own impulses to increase the cultural influence for our evangelical brands. We must also refrain from selecting only the white, middle- to upper-class as the target population for our evangelical brands to guard against unknowingly and unintentionally reflecting the prevailing racialized social order within our evangelical brand.

CONCLUSION

The ministry of Tim Keller at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City was an astonishing development within twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States. During the late twentieth century, Keller started Redeemer with a core group of around a dozen. Over the next couple decades, Redeemer grew into a multi-site megachurch in which thousands met for worship in multiple locations on the Upper West and Upper East Sides of Manhattan. As if this dramatic growth were not enough, the location where Keller was able to gather in these large crowds made the success of Redeemer even more astonishing. Keller chose center city Manhattan as Redeemer's ministry area. Comprising the section of Manhattan from 96th Street to the Financial District, center city Manhattan seemed like a particularly hostile place to launch a new evangelical church. Most evangelicals during the latter twentieth century perceived of New York City as a chaotic compilation of urban pathologies, fierce secularity, and dazzling diversity. It did not seem possible that the evangelical faith could prevail amid such treacherous spiritual forces, and few gave Keller's ministry much chance of succeeding. Keller did not just prove them wrong, in the process his ministry at Redeemer became one of the most influential within U.S. evangelicalism during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

A certain demographic of the population in New York City found Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church appealing. This population was the young urban professionals who came to New York City during the 1980s and 1990s to "make it" in their lucrative careers as bankers, lawyers, and business and media executives. These young urban professionals were attracted to the worship at Redeemer Presbyterian Church for the most part because Keller crafted his preaching intentionally to connect with them.

Keller considered New York City to be the one of the most strategically significant cities in the United States. Its standing as the dominant cultural and commercial capital for most of the twentieth century afforded New York City the ability to affect social trends across the entire United States. New York City offered Keller a platform from which he would be able to magnify the cultural influence of his evangelical brand across the entire United States. Keller considered young urban professionals to be the key to accessing the expanded cultural influence New York City had to offer, and gathering them in such large numbers with his evangelical brand was a breathtaking victory. By doing what many considered to be an impossible feat, Keller caught the attention of evangelicals around the country. Keller's success also inspired dozens of evangelical pastors (including me!) to leave their established ministries in other parts of the United States to start new churches in New York City.

Yet for all the undeniable and astonishing success of Keller's ministry, a closer look into who was attending Redeemer's worship services prompts a reevaluation of what has happening. Based on the demographic information provided earlier,[1] the majority of the young urban professionals who were attending Redeemer's worship services were middle- to upper-class whites with some background in Protestant Christianity. By targeting young urban professionals as the key to accessing the cultural influence of New York City, Keller also inadvertently prioritized gathering in a white, middle- to upper-class population amid the dazzling diversity of New York City. Keller's ministry then exhibited a link between his drive to increase the cultural influence of his evangelical brand and garnering a white, middle- to upper-class audience as the key to achieving this increased cultural influence.

---

[1] This demographic information can be found in the introduction and the last section of chapter two.

Nothing in my research indicated that Keller intended for this linkage to occur. However, through a socio-historical analysis of twentieth-century evangelicalism, I did uncover that Keller's ministry was not the only occurrence of this linkage. In fact, my socio-historical analysis revealed that Keller's ministry can be understood as an iteration of a pattern that was repeated throughout twentieth-century evangelicalism in the United States in general and New York City in particular.

Through this socio-historical analysis, I identified two defining characteristics present in any era of twentieth-century evangelicalism. First, evangelical leaders exhibited an unyielding drive to expand the influence of their evangelical brand within U.S. society. By spreading the cultural influence of their evangelical brand, these evangelical leaders hoped not only to save souls, but also to deliver U.S. society from the spiritual forces of moral degeneracy that they believed would lead to a catastrophic social breakdown. Evangelicalism has been a contested category throughout the twentieth century as differing factions have advanced alternative methods of cultural engagement with U.S. society. The leaders of these differing factions vied for their evangelical brand to gain prominence as the "true" expression of the evangelical faith. The path to the greatest possible cultural influence went through other competing evangelical brands as much as making inroads within mainstream public perception.

Second, these evangelical leaders amassed large gatherings of middle- to upper-class whites as a means of increasing the cultural influence for their evangelical brand. As a result of their connection with their white, middle- to upper-class audience, these evangelical leaders allowed their evangelical brand to become complicit with the prevailing racialized social order of the United States. Sometimes this complicity took the form of

evangelical leaders openly embracing and espousing white supremacist views. Other times this complicity was more subtle, identifiable only in an evangelical leader's silence and non-action. Either way, the competition to gather white, middle- to upper-class America under a particular evangelical banner spurred major evangelical movements in the twentieth century to be aligned with the racialized social order that prevailed in their historical context. Additionally, the twentieth-century contest to define what constituted "true" evangelicalism also reflected the racialized social order. The competition for a particular evangelical brand to lay claim to the "true" evangelical faith occurred among white leaders of differing evangelical factions. These white evangelical leaders for the most part ignored and excluded pastors of color from staking a meaningful claim within this contest even though their faith had much in common with the core theological beliefs of the white leaders' evangelical brands. The exclusion of people of color from this contest contributed to these white leaders' evangelical brands becoming complicit with the racialized social order, because the voices and perspectives of people of color were not acknowledged, and therefore not able to inject greater racial awareness into the debate about what constituted "true" evangelical faith.

New York City was a critical setting in which various iterations of the repeating pattern involving these two defining characteristics surfaced during the twentieth century. The promise and peril of New York City prompted a paradoxical fascination within the twentieth-century evangelical imagination. As the main cultural and commercial center of the United States, New York City held the promise of exponentially multiplying the cultural influence of any successful evangelical ministry and, consequently, the salubrious effects that evangelical ministry could have within U.S. society. In the nineteenth century, New

317

York City had become the center of a common evangelical culture that spread its influence across the United States. Although that common evangelical culture fractured at the end of the nineteenth century, the promise of regaining that broad cultural influence lured twentieth-century evangelical figures to the Big Apple like a siren call. New York City was also viewed as a place of great spiritual peril. The religious pluralism, commercialism, and secularity of New York City prompted the image of a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah within the twentieth-century evangelical imagination. It was perceived as a place of immorality and decadence, hazardous to the spiritual well-being of any good evangelical believer. Yet the promise outweighed the peril. Major evangelical figures approached New York City as the platform from which they would launch evangelical ministries that they believed would exert positive cultural influence across the entire U.S. society. These evangelical ministries became different historical iterations of a recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism.

The first historical iteration of this repeating pattern occurred in the battle between the modernists and the fundamentalists of the early twentieth century. At stake was the coveted prize of defining what constituted "true" evangelical faith. The modernists hailed Harry Emerson Fosdick as their champion. Urbane and eloquent, Fosdick advocated for a liberal evangelicalism that integrated the theological innovations of higher criticism and scientific discovery into the Christian faith. This liberal evangelicalism was designed to make the evangelical faith appealing to the rising middle-class of white professionals in New York City during the early twentieth century. The fundamentalists rallied behind John Roach Straton, the theatrical, pugilistic preacher of an old-time, revivalist gospel complete with the doomsday fixings of premillennial dispensationalism. From Calvary Baptist

Church on 57th Street in Manhattan, Straton launched a counter-offensive against the modernizing forces embraced by Fosdick and harangued the burgeoning consumer and entertainment culture of New York City.

The second iteration of the recurring pattern in which an insatiable drive for greater cultural influence for a particular evangelical brand was linked to making that evangelical brand complicit with the prevailing racialized social order materialized in the ministry of Billy Graham, the winsome champion of mid-twentieth century new evangelicalism. Although preaching an evangelical faith theologically aligned with the fundamentalists of the early twentieth century, Graham eschewed the damaging confrontations advanced by the earlier generation of fundamentalists. After the public relations nightmare of the Scopes Trial in 1925, Graham and his new evangelicals wanted to restore the credibility of the evangelical faith to mainstream, middle-class America. New York City offered Graham a spotlight that could catch the attention not only of the millions who lived there, but also across the entire United States. His crusade at the Madison Square Garden in 1957 vaulted Graham's popularity to the level of celebrity evangelist. His new evangelicalism settled in as the mainstream evangelical faith for middle-class America, asserting itself as the "true" expression of evangelicalism and functioned as a spiritual balm for white, middle-class America during the anxiety-provoking social changes of the mid-twentieth century.

After the influence of Graham's mainstream evangelicalism waned among the contesting evangelical factions of the latter decades of the twentieth century, Tim Keller's ministry emerged as the final twentieth-century iteration of this repeating pattern. The promise and peril of New York City enticed Keller, just as it had Fosdick, Straton, and Graham before him. Keller fashioned an evangelical ministry for New York City in the hope

that the influence of his evangelical brand would ripple across the whole country. Taking up the mantle of an expert apologist, Keller countered the historical image of evangelicals as culturally insensitive and anti-intellectual with a professorial and lawyerly style of preaching. He crafted his preaching to appeal to the migratory population of young urban professionals who were coming to New York City to "make it" in their careers during the latter decades of the twentieth century. These young urban professionals were perceived to be the key to gaining the greatest possible cultural influence for his evangelical brand, and Keller used his preaching to gather a sizable audience of these young urban professionals. The success of Keller's ministry at Redeemer Presbyterian Church generated a triumphal narrative that evangelicalism had reclaimed much of the cultural standing in New York City that had been lost at the end of the nineteenth century.

The ministries of Straton, Fosdick, Graham, and Keller all exhibited the first defining characteristic of twentieth-century evangelicalism, namely the insatiable drive to increase the cultural influence of their evangelical brand. Believing that the white, middle- to upper-class offered the greatest opportunity to increase the cultural influence for their evangelical brand, each of them calibrated his evangelical ministry to attract this segment of the population in New York City. As a consequence, each of their ministries succumbed to the second defining characteristic within twentieth-century evangelicalism. They allowed their evangelical brands to become complicit with the mode of maintaining the racialized social order that prevailed in their historical context in exchange for amassing the largest possible crowd of white, middle- to upper-class people.

This complicity unveiled itself differently within each of these ministries. Straton openly embraced white supremacism, heralding the values of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism

as the vehicle for delivering New York City, and through New York City the whole of the United States, from moral degeneracy and social meltdown. The complicity of Fosdick's ministry with the racialized social order was more subtle. Although willing to invite African American pastors to preach at Riverside Community Church, Fosdick refused to adjust his worship services to attract the neighboring African American communities. Anyone was welcome to worship at Riverside Community Church, provided they worshipped in accordance with a style that prioritized the aesthetic sensibilities of the white, middle- to upper-class professionals in New York City.

At times, Graham appeared to oppose the prevailing racialized social order. Graham invited Martin Luther King, Jr. to give the invocation at the 1957 Crusade and encouraged the African American pastor Howard Jones to join his Crusade staff. Even so, these gestures were largely symbolic as Graham continued to participate in segregated revival events after the 1957 Crusade and decried the civil disobedience of King and other civil rights leaders as lawless. By taking these positions, Graham endeared himself to the mainstream white population during the mid-twentieth century at the expense of aligning his evangelical brand with the racialized social order.

Keller demonstrated greater racial awareness than any of his evangelical predecessors and explicitly denounced racism as a vile evil in his sermons. However, Keller's sermons also concealed white privilege and normalized the cultural narrative of white young urban professionals who came to New York City to "make it" in their careers. These are just two of the mechanisms of color-blind racism that surfaced in Keller's sermons. Color-blind racism was the primary mode of reinforcing and reproducing the racialized social order in the late twentieth century. Keller's ministry then became

complicit with the prevailing racialized social order through his efforts to connect with these migratory, white young urban professionals.

Although the particular ways in which the two defining characteristics surfaced depended on their historical context, the ministries of Straton, Fosdick, Graham, and Keller represented distinct iterations of the recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism. In their pursuit for ever greater cultural influence, they geared their evangelical ministry to amass the largest possible following of the white, middle- to upper-class segment of the population in New York City. With the exception of Straton who explicitly endorsed white supremacy, the linkage between their evangelical brand and the prevailing racialized social order generally occurred without their knowledge or intention. Although Keller demonstrated more racial awareness than any of his predecessors, it was without his knowledge that his sermons ultimately reflected the subtle mechanisms of color-blind racism. The repetition of this pattern among the ministry of an evangelical leader as well-intentioned as Keller prompts three parting comments that have implications for the study and practice of evangelicalism in the twenty-first century.

First, twenty-first century scholars have the opportunity to contribute fresh insights into the racial dynamics within U.S. evangelicalism by employing differential racialization analyses. Twentieth century studies of evangelicalism have been dominated by the black-white binary paradigm. After the Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965, one of the largest, and still growing, groups within U.S. evangelicalism has been Asian Americans. Holding to the confines of the black-white binary obscures the unique experience of Asian Americans within U.S. evangelicalism. This does not mean, however, that the black-white binary is wholly unhelpful when analyzing evangelicalism in the United States.

My content analysis of Keller's sermons was conducted within the confines of the black-white binary paradigm in spite of the reality that one-third to one-half of those in attendance at Redeemer's worship services were Asian Americans. The reason for restricting the content analysis to the black-white binary was that Keller sermons addressed race according this paradigm. Through the black-white binary, I was able to pinpoint how the mechanisms of color-blind racism that maintain the racialized social order in the post-Civil Rights Act era of the twentieth century were present in Keller's preaching. The racial hierarchy of the black-white binary also enabled me to identify the Asian American congregants as honorary whites who function to further mechanisms of color-blind racism stowed away in Keller's preaching.

Even so, the racial hierarchy of the black-white binary also inhibited a full analysis of the racial dynamics experienced by the Asian Americans who were at Redeemer's worship services and listened to Keller's sermons. Within the confines of the black-white binary, the subjective experience of Asian Americans could be given no voice. Instead, their subjective experience of Redeemer's worship services became lost within a racial scheme designed to organize the understanding of race in terms of blacks and whites. A more comprehensive ethnographic study of the Asian Americans who attended Redeemer's worship services would provide a more complete analysis of the racial dynamics they experienced when listening to Keller's sermons. This study could be conducted according to a differential racialization theory and offer fresh insight into the effects of Keller's sermons on his Asian American audience.

Some scholars in the twentieth-first century have already taken up this call. For example, Kathleen Garces-Foley, Elaine Ecklund, Rebecca Kim, and Sharon Kim have

pursued studies of Asian American evangelicals that set aside the black-white binary in favor of a differential racialization approach. These studies indicate the beginning of a promising trend to identify the voices and experiences of people not raced as white or black within evangelicalism. They could help to destabilize the twentieth-century association of evangelicalism with whiteness and ultimately open further inquiry into the relationship of white evangelicals to Asian American evangelicals unencumbered by the black-white binary paradigm.

My second parting comment is that the recurring pattern within twentieth-century evangelicalism identified through my socio-historical analysis offers a conceptual framework for the study of twenty-first-century expressions of evangelicalism. With the ascent of Donald Trump to the presidency, the striving of white evangelicals to assert their cultural influence has entered a new phase. Winning a startling eighty percent of the white evangelical vote, Trump has returned the favor by granting white evangelicals access to a cultural influence that is arguably greater than at any other point during the twentieth century. Some evangelical leaders, like Jerry Falwell, Jr. and Robert Jeffress, have basked in this newfound cultural power, claiming that they are bringing America back to God. Other evangelical leaders, notably Tim Keller, have sought to distance their evangelical brand from supporting Trump and his policies.[2]

The twentieth-century contest to claim the status of the "true" evangelical faith within public perception continues into the twenty-first century. At stake in this contest is the same coveted prize, securing the allegiance of the white, middle- to upper-class to a

---

[2] Center for Religion and Civic Culture, "The Varieties of American Evangelicalism," November 1, 2018, https://crcc.usc.edu/report/the-varieties-of-american-evangelicalism/.

particular evangelical brand and reaping the benefit of the increased cultural influence this segment of the population can bring to bear. The association of evangelicalism with the mechanisms of color-blind racism that maintain the racialized social order in the United States also persists into the twenty-first century. White evangelical support for President Trump has not wavered even amidst his nativist push for a wall along the southern border and his unwillingness to denounce the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville that resulted in the death of woman counter-protester. If anything, the association between evangelicalism and the racialized social order that promotes the social advantages of whites over other races has become less subtle in the early decades of the twenty-first century than it was during the latter decades of the twentieth. Given these realities, further analysis of the racial dynamics within U.S. evangelicalism could benefit from keeping in view the recurring pattern framework developed in this study. Not only would further study within this paradigm reveal the ongoing, pragmatic complicity of evangelicalism with the racialized social order, it would also help to increase the racial awareness of twenty-first century white evangelical leaders who could in turn play a significant part in preventing their evangelical brand from being complicit with racial injustice.

My third and final comment continues this theme by emphasizing the importance of white evangelical pastors and leaders to become versed in critical race theory, particularly the mechanisms of color-blind racism that maintain the racialized social order in the post-Civil Rights Act era. My socio-historical analysis of Keller's ministry and content analysis of Keller's sermons illustrates why this is so important. Keller's sermons explicitly denounced racism and encouraged his congregants to remedy the harms caused by racial injustice. Keller even revealed an awareness of white culture and told his white congregants that

they needed to listen to people of color to learn more about it. Yet his good intentions did not prevent the mechanisms of color-blind racism from creeping into his sermons without Keller even recognizing that was happening. The presence of the mechanisms of color-blind racism made Keller's preaching inadvertently complicit with the prevailing racialized social order of the late twentieth century. The complicity of Keller's sermons with the racialized social order ultimately undercut his explicit exhortations against the sin of racism. As a result of tailoring his sermons to attract the young urban professional population of New York City, Keller's evangelical brand became unwittingly compromised as a means of combatting systemic racial injustice.

This same pattern could be repeated in the ministry of any white evangelical pastor, myself included. Our good intentions and a desire to encourage parishioners to remedy the evils of racial injustice are not enough to stop us white, evangelical, male pastors from the fate of unknowingly and unintentionally reflecting the racialized social order through our preaching. By supplementing our exegetical and homiletical technique with an understanding of critical race theory, particularly the mechanisms of color-blind racism, we will be better able to prevent our preaching from lapsing into a surreptitious means of reinforcing white supremacy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Recordings (Schedule of Keller Sermons)

S01. Keller, Tim. "Christ Our Head" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. July 9, 1989. MP3 Audio.

S02. Keller, Tim. "Spirit & Presence of God" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. December 10, 1989. MP3 Audio.

S03. Keller, Tim. "Why Do We Need the Bible?" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. *Sermon on the Mount* Sermon Series. March 18, 1990.

S04. Keller, Tim. "New Life" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 14, 1990. MP3 Audio.

S05. Keller, Tim. "The Making of Faith" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. February 10, 1991. MP3 Audio.

S06. Keller, Tim. "Light from the Height" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 16, 1991. MP3 Audio.

S07. Keller, Tim. "The Glory in the Cross" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 22, 1991. MP3 Audio.

S08. Keller, Tim. "The Sandals of Peace" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 1, 1992. MP3 Audio.

S09. Keller, Tim. "Our Ransom, Part 2" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 17, 1992. MP3 Audio.

S10. Keller, Tim. "Alive with Christ, Part 3" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 15, 1992. MP3 Audio.

S11. Keller, Tim. "Danger Every Hour" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 25, 1993. MP3 Audio.

S12. Keller, Tim. "Sex—The Biblical Guidelines" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 1, 1993. MP3 Audio.

S13. Keller, Tim. "The Problem of the City" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 7, 1993. MP3 Audio.

S14. Keller, Tim. "The Cross and the Temple" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 27, 1994. MP3 Audio.

S15. Keller, Tim. "The Freedom of the Truth, Part 2" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 26, 1994. MP3 Audio.

S16. Keller, Tim. "Abraham and the Test of Faith; Commitment, Undivided Heart" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 30, 1994. MP3 Audio.

S17. Keller, Tim. "Born of Him" (sermon). *Knowing that We Know God* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 26, 1995. MP3 Audio.

S18. Keller, Tim. "Is Diversity Possible?: An Open Forum" (talk). *Redeemer Open Forums*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 30, 1995. MP3 Audio.

S19. Keller, Tim. "Revival" (sermon). *Life of Moses* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. August 6, 1995. MP3 Audio.

S20. Keller, Tim. "Joy in the City" (sermon). *The Book of Acts* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 19, 1995. MP3 Audio.

S21. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Predator" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 21, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S22. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Self-Deceit" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 28, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S23. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Leaven" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. February 4, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S24. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Unbelief" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. February 11, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S25. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Self-Righteousness" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. February 25, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S26. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Leprosy (Part 1)" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 3, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S27. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Leprosy (Part 2)" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 10, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S28. Keller, Tim. "Sin as Slavery" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 17, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S29. Keller, Tim. "Healing of Sin (Part 1)" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 24, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S30. Keller, Tim. "Healing of Sin (Part 2)" (sermon). *The Faces of Sin* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 31, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S31. Keller, Tim. "Work" (sermon). *The Gospel and the End of Time* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. July 7, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S32. Keller, Tim. "The Grace of Jesus" (sermon). *The Real Jesus Part 1: His Teaching* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 6, 1996. MP3 Audio.

S33. Keller, Tim. "The King is Dying" (sermon). *The Real Jesus Part 3: The King* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 16, 1997. MP3 Audio.

S34. Keller, Tim. "The New City" (sermon). *The Real Jesus Part 4: The Lord* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 1, 1997. MP3 Audio.

S35. Keller, Tim. "A Preacher's Disobedience" (sermon). *Pointers to Christ: Directional Signs in History* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 26, 1997. MP3 Audio.

S36. Keller, Tim. "Love for the City" (sermon). *The Church—How To Believe Despite Christians* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 8, 1998. MP3 Audio.

S37. Keller, Tim. "My God is a Rock; Listening to African-American Spirituals: An Open Forum" (talk). *Redeemer Open Forums*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 3, 1998. MP3 Audio.

S38. Keller, Tim. "Submit To One Another" (sermon). *Ephesians: God's New Society* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. August 16, 1998. MP3 Audio.

S39. Keller, Tim. "Let Nothing Move You (Easter)" (sermon). *The Mount; Life in the Kingdom* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 4, 1999. MP3 Audio.

S40. Keller, Tim. "The One God Uses" (sermon). *Receiving the Spirit (with Elisha)* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 24, 1999. MP3 Audio.

S41. Keller, Tim. "Praying Our Tears" (sermon). *Psalms—The Songs of Jesus* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. February 27, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S42. Keller, Tim. "Considering the Great Love of God" (sermon). *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 10, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S43. Keller, Tim. "God Our Father" (sermon). *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 17, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S44. Keller, Tim. "God Our Friend" (sermon). *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 24, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S45. Keller, Tim. "God Our Lover" (sermon). *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 1, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S46. Keller, Tim. "God Our King" (sermon). *Four Ways to Live; Four Ways to Love* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 8, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S47. Keller, Tim. "The Song of Creation" (sermon). *Genesis—The Gospel According to God* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 15, 2000. MP3 Audio.

S48. Keller, Tim. "Lord of the City" (sermon). *Genesis—The Gospel According to God* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 7, 2001. MP3 Audio.

S49. Keller, Tim. "New York, New York: An Open Forum" (talk). *Redeemer Open Forums*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 11, 2001. MP3 Audio.

S50. Keller, Tim. "Should I Not Love That Great City?" (sermon). *The Church in the City* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 14, 2001. MP3 Audio.

S51. Keller, Tim. "The New City 2002" (sermon). *The Gospel According to Moses* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 27, 2002. MP3 Audio.

S52. Keller, Tim. "Money" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 9, 2003. MP3 Audio.

S53. Keller, Tim. "What is Christian Culture Renewal?" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 5, 2003. MP3 Audio.

S54. Keller, Tim. "Longing for Home" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 28, 2003. MP3 Audio.

S55. Keller, Tim. "Hope, Race, and Power" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 25, 2004. MP3 Audio.

S56. Keller, Tim. "The Healing of Anger." Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 17, 2004. MP3 Audio.

S57. Keller, Tim. "Your Plans: God's Plans." Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. December 12, 2004. MP3 Audio.

S58. Keller, Tim. "Repairing Relationships" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 5, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S59. Keller, Tim. "Words" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 15, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S60. Keller, Tim. "The Prodigal Sons" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 11, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S61. Keller, Tim. "Christ, Our Life" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 18, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S62. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 25, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S63. Keller, Tim. "The City" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 2, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S64. Keller, Tim. "Community (2005)" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 9, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S65. Keller, Tim. "Witness" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 16, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S66. Keller, Tim. "Justice" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 23, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S67. Keller, Tim. "Culture" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 30, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S68. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel and Your Wealth" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 6, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S69. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel and Your Self" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 13, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S70. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel, the Church, and the World" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 20, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S71. Keller, Tim. "Jesus at His Friend's Feast" (sermon). *The Vision of Redeemer* Sermon Series. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 27, 2005. MP3 Audio.

S72. Keller, Tim. "The Family of Jesus" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 5, 2006. MP3 Audio.

S73. Keller, Tim. "Injustice: Hasn't Christianity Been an Instrument for Oppression?" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 15, 2006. MP3 Audio.

S74. Keller, Tim. "Vocation and the Steward-Leader" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 8, 2007. MP3 Audio.

S75. Keller, Tim. "The Fire of God" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 20, 2007. MP3 Audio.

S76. Keller, Tim. "I Thirst" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 9, 2008. MP3 Audio.

S77. Keller, Tim. "Listening to the Word" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. September 7, 2008. MP3 Audio.

S78. Keller, Tim. "Counter-Culture for the Common Good" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 5, 2009. MP3 Audio.

S79. Keller, Tim. "Ain't That Good News: What African-American Spirituals Teach Us About Heaven and Hell" (talk). *Redeemer Open Forums*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 22, 2009. MP3 Audio.

S80. Keller, Tim. "New York, New York" (talk). *Redeemer Open Forums*. Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 25, 2009. MP3 Audio.

S81. Keller, Tim. "A Vision for Culture-Making" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. October 10, 2010. MP3 Audio.

S82. Keller, Tim. "A New Church for the City" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 7, 2010. MP3 Audio.

S83. Keller, Tim. "What Is Christian Culture Engagement" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 10, 2011. MP3 Audio.

S84. Keller, Tim. "A New Humanity" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 6, 2011. MP3 Audio.

S85. Keller, Tim. "Treasures" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 3, 2012. MP3 Audio.

S86. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel in a Pluralist Society" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. January 13, 2013. MP3 Audio.

S87. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel to the African" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. March 3, 2013. MP3 Audio.

S88. Keller, Tim. "The Gospel and Idols" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. May 12, 2013. MP3 Audio.

S89. Keller, Tim. "Home From Exile" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. December 22, 2013. MP3 Audio.

S90. Keller, Tim. "Our Vocation: Lay Ministry" (talk). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. June 29, 2014. MP3 Audio.

S91. Keller, Tim. "Saul's Rejection" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 19, 2015. MP3 Audio.

S92. Keller, Tim. "The Wisdom of Generosity" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 29, 2015. MP3 Audio.

S93. Keller, Tim. "Serving the City" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. April 17, 2016. MP3 Audio.

S94. Keller, Tim. "Gospel Identity" (sermon). Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City. November 18, 2017. MP3 Audio.

Other Primary Materials (Books, Articles, Interview)

Bryan, William Jennings. "God and Evolution." *New York Times*, February 26, 1922.

Fosdick, Harry Emerson. "Attacks W.J.B." *New York Times*, March 12, 1922.

_____. "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" *Christian Work* 102 (June 10, 1922): 716-722.

Graham, Billy. *Just As I Am: The Autobiography of Billy Graham*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

Henry, Carl F. H. *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003 (originally published in 1947).

Keller, Tim. "An Evangelical Mission in a Secular City." In *Center City Churches: The New Urban Frontier*, edited by Lyle E. Schaller, 31-36. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

_____. "A New Kind of Urban Christian." *Christianity Today* (May 2006): 36-40.

_____. *Center City: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City.* Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

_____. *Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex, and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.

_____. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. New York: Penguin Books, 2010.

_____. *The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

_____. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.

_____. "Tim Keller on Churches and Race." Video Interview, posted by Big Think. Accessed April 11, 2017. http://bigthink.com/videos/tim-keller-on-churches-and-race.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. "The Billy Graham Campaign." *Messenger*, June 4, 1957.

_____. "Literalism, Individualism, and Billy Graham." *Christian Century,* May 23, 1956.

Straton, John Roach. *Fighting the Devil in Modern Babylon*. Boston: Stratford Co., 1929.

_____. *The Famous New York Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates: The Orthodox Side*. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1925.

_____. *The Old Gospel at the Heart of Metropolis*. New York: George H. Doran Co., 1925.

Secondary Sources (Books, Articles, Blogs, Websites, Videos)

Aikman, David. *Billy Graham: His Life and Influence*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007.

Aldridge, Alan. *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction* 3rd Edition. Malden, MA: Polity, 2013.

Alumkal, Antony William. "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: A Racial Formation Theory Analysis." *Sociology of Religion* 65.3 (2004): 195-213.

_____. *Asian American Evangelical Churches: Race, Ethnicity, and Assimilation in the Second Generation*. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC, 2003.

Ammerman, Nancy. "Accounting for Christian Fundamentalisms: Social Dynamics and Rhetorical Strategies." In *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, The Fundamentalism Project, Volume 4, edited by Marty E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, 149-172. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Ammerman, Nancy. "American Evangelicals in American Culture: Continuity and Change." In *Evangelicals in Democracy in America,* Volume 1, edited by Steven G. Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel, 44-73. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.

_____. "The Dynamics of Christian Fundamentalism." In *Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements*, The Fundamentalism Project, Volume 4, edited by Marty E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, 13-17. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

_____. *Bible Believers: Fundamentalists in the Modern World*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987.

Baggett, Kevin Thomas. "'Win the City, Win the World:' The Urban Missiology of Roger S. Greenway." DMin. diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2013.

Bailey, Sarah Pulliam. "American Idols." Interview with Tim Keller. *Christianity Today* 53.11 (2009): 71. http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/november/1.71.html

Balmer, Randall. "Billy Graham: American Evangelist." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. December 27, 2018. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Billy-Graham.

_____. *The Making of Evangelicalism: From Revivalism to Politics and Beyond.* Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010.

Bartholomew, Tuck. "Reviving Orthodoxy: A Study of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City." PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2001.

Bell, Derrick A., Jr. "Brown v. Board of Education and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma." *Harvard Law Review* 93.9 (1980): 518-533.

_____. *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.

_____. *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Beulah, Tejai. "Soul Salvation, Social Liberation: Race and Evangelical Christianity in the Black Power Era, 1968-1979." PhD diss., Drew University, 2018.

Bielo, James. *Emerging Evangelicals: Faith, Modernity, and the Desire for Authenticity.* New York: New York University Press, 2011.

"Billy Graham and the New York Crusade." YouTube video 51.28. From a television broadcast on May 15, 1957. Posted by "SpeakFromThe Heart," July 28, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_3EIBsPGqDw

Billy Graham Library Blog. "Crusade Spotlight: New York, NY." January 8, 2013. https://billygrahamlibrary.org/crusade-city-spotlight-new-york-ny/

Binder, Frederick M., and David M. Reimers. *All Nations Under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.

Bobo, Lawrence, James R. Kluegel, and Ryan A. Smith. "Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a Kinder, Gentler, Antiblack Ideology." In *Racial Attitudes in the 1990s: Continuity and Change*, edited by Steven A. Tuch and Jack K. Martin, 15-42. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1997.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo. "The Invisible Weight of Whiteness: The Racial Grammar of Everyday Life in Contemporary America." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 35.2 (2012): 173-194.

_____. "The Linguistics of Color Blind Racism: How to Talk Nasty About Blacks Without Sounding "Racist"." *Critical Sociology* 28.1-2 (2002): 41-64.

_____. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

_____. "Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation." *American Sociological Review* 62.3 (1997): 465-480.

_____. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick. "When Whites Flock Together: The Social Psychology of White Habitus." *Critical Sociology* 32.2-3 (2006): 229-253.

"Born Again! The Year of the Evangelical." *Newsweek.* October 26, 1976.

Bowman, Matthew. *The Urban Pulpit: New York City and the Fate of Liberal Evangelicalism*. New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Britannica Academic. "Harry Emerson Fosdick." Accessed September 9, 2018. https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.drew.edu/levels/collegiate/article/Harry-Emerson-Fosdick/34994.

Brooks, David. "Who Is John Stott?" *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 2004.
    https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/30/opinion/who-is-john-stott.html.

Brooks, Roy L. and Kirsten Widner. "In Defense of the Black-White Binary: Reclaiming a
    Tradition of Civil Rights Scholarship" (2010). In *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting
    Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 499-510. Philadelphia: Temple
    University Press, 2013.

Burrow, Rufus, Jr.. "Graham, King, and the Beloved Community." In *The Legacy of Billy
    Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, edited by Michael G.
    Long, 161-177. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Busto, Rudy V. "The Gospel According to the Model Minority?: Hazarding an Interpretation
    of Asian American Evangelical College Students." *Amerasia Journal* 22.1 (1996): 133-
    147.

Butler, Jon. "God, Gotham, and Modernity." *Journal of American History* 103.1 (2016): 19-
    33.

_____. "Theory and God in Gotham." *History and Theory*, 45 (December 2006): 47-61.

Carnes, Tony. "A Profile of New York City's African American Church Leaders." In *New York
    Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis, 55-73. New
    York, NY: New York University Press, 2001.

_____. "New York's New Hope." *Christianity Today* (May 2004): 32-37.

_____. "Religions in the City: An Overview." In *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited
    by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis, 3-25. New York, NY: New York University
    Press, 2001.

_____, ed. (2008-2016). *A Journey Through NYC Religions.* http://www.nycreligion.info/

_____. "The Evangelical Christians of Williamsburg-Greenpoint: A Journey Through
    Williamsburg-Greenpoint Religions." *A Journey Through NYC Religions*. September
    26, 2018. https://www.nycreligion.info/evangelical-christians-
    williamsburggreenpoint/.

_____. "The Making of the Postsecular City: the Manhattan Evangelicals, Part 1." *A Journey
    Through NYC Religions*. December 1, 2010. http://www.nycreligion.info/making-
    postsecular-city-manhattan-evangelicals-part-1/.

Carpenter, Joel. A. *Revive Us Again: The Reawakening of American Fundamentalism*. New
    York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Center for Religion and Civic Culture. "The Varieties of American Evangelicalism."
November 1, 2018. https://crcc.usc.edu/report/the-varieties-of-american-evangelicalism/.

Chandler, Daniel Ross. "Harry Emerson Fosdick: Spokesman for the Modernist Movement."
Religious Communication Today 5 (1982): 1-4.

Chang, Robert S. "Toward an Asian American Legal Scholarship: Critical Race Theory,
Poststructuralism, and Narrative Space" (1993). In *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting
Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 466-478. Philadelphia: Temple
University Press, 2013.

"Chicago Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern." (1973).
https://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/about-esa/history/chicago-declaration-evangelical-social-concern/

Cimino, Richard P., Nadia A. Mian, and Weishan Huang. *Ecologies of Faith in New York City:
The Evolution of Religious Institutions*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Clarke, Simon and Steve Garner. *White Identities: A Critical Sociological Approach*. New
York: Pluto Press 2009.

Coffman, Elesha J. *The Christian Century and the Rise of the Protestant Mainline.* New York:
Oxford University Press 2013.

Conn, Harvie. *The American City and the Evangelical Church: A Historical Overview.* Grand
Rapids, MI: Baker Books (1994).

Cox, Harvey. "The Lasting Imprint of Billy Graham: Recollections and Prognostications." In
The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist,
edited by Michael G. Long, 219-229. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press,
2008.

Cravens, Hamilton. "Book Review: The History of White People by Nell Irvin Painter." *The
Journal of Southern History* 77.4 (2011): 895-896.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*.
New York: The New Press, 1995.

Cruz, Nicky. "Nicky Cruz: David Wilkerson 'Never Lost His Heart'." Interview by Trevor
Persaud. *Christianity Today*. April 29, 2011.
http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/aprilweb-only/nickycruz.html?start=1.

Davis, Morris L. *The Methodist Unification: Christianity and the Politics of Race in the Jim
Crow Era*. New York: New York University Press, 2008.

Dayton, Donald. "Some Doubts About the Usefulness of the Category 'Evangelical'." In *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, edited by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, 245-251. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

Delgado, Richard, Jean Stefancic, and Ernesto Liendo. *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction*, Second Edition. New York: NYU Press, 2012.

Delgado, Richard and Jean Stefancic, eds. *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

Dhingra, Pawan. *Managing Multicultural Lives: Asian American Professionals and the Challenge of Multiple Identities*. Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007.

_____. "Being American Between Black and White: Second-Generation Asian American Professionals' Racial Identities." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 6.2 (2003): 117-147.

Dochuk, Darren. *From Bible Belt to Sun Belt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2010.

Donald, Peter. "Sermons and Soda Water: A Rich Philadelphia Widow Wants to Save New York Society." *New York Magazine*, November 7, 1988.

Dorrien, Gary. "Niebuhr and Graham: Modernity, Complexity, White Supremacism, Justice, Ambiguity." In *The Legacy of Billy Graham: Critical Reflections on America's Greatest Evangelist*, edited by Michael G. Long, 141-160. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008.

Dostoyevsky, Fyodor. *The Brothers Karamazov*. New York: Penguin Classics 1993 (originally published in 1880).

Ecklund, Elaine Howard. *Korean American Evangelicals: New Models for Civic Life*. New York: Oxford University Press 2008.

Ecklund, Elaine Howard, and Jerry Z. Park. "Asian American Community Participation and Religion: Civic Model Minorities?." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8.1 (2005): 1-21.

Elisha, Omri. *Moral Ambition: Mobilization and Social Outreach in Evangelical Megachurches.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011.

Emerson, Michael and Christian Smith. *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Emerson, Michael and Rodney M. Woo. *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Emerson, Michael, Curtiss Paul DeYoung, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim. *United By Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Field, Phyllis. *The Politics of Race in New York: The Struggle for Black Suffrage in the Civil War Era*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1982.

Fox, Margalit. "Rev. David Wilkerson Dies at 79; Started Times Square Church." *New York Times*, April 28, 2011. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/29/nyregion/rev-david-wilkerson-79-evangelist-dies-in-crash.html.

Frady, Marshall. *Billy Graham: A Parable of American Righteousness*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979.

Frame, John. *Van Til: The Theologian*. Pasedena, TX: Pilgrim Publication 1976.

Gallagher, Charles A. "Color-Blind Privilege: The Social and Political Functions of Erasing the Color Line in Post-Race America." *Race, Gender, and Class* 10.4 (2003): 22-37.

Gallagher, Sally K. *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Life*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Garces-Foley, Kathleen. *Crossing the Ethnic Divide: The Multiethnic Church on a Mission.* AAR Academy Series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Garrison, Arthur H. "NYPD Stop and Frisk, Perceptions of Criminals, Race and the Meaning of *Terry v Ohio*: A Content Analysis of *Floyd, et al. v City of New York.*" *Rutgers Race and The Law Review* 15 (2014): 65-156.

Goodstein, Laurie. "Rev. Dr. Carl F. H. Henry, 90, Brain of Evangelical Movement." *New York Times*, December 13, 2003. http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/13/us/rev-dr-carl-f-h-henry-90-brain-of-evangelical-movement.html

Giggie, John M. and Diane Winston, eds. *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture.* New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Gilmore-Clough, Gregory Kipp. "The Social Is Personal: Harry Emerson Fosdick, The Riverside Church, and the Social Gospel in the Great Depression." PhD diss., Temple University, 2014.

Giordano, Ralph G. *Satan in the Dance Hall: Rev. John Roach Straton, Social Dancing, and Morality in the 1920s New York City*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2008.

Gornick, Mark R. "The Legacy of Harvie M. Conn," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35.4 (2011): 212-217.

Gotanda, Neil. "A Critique of 'Our Constitution is Color-Blind'" (1991). In *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, edited by Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, 35-37. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

_____. "Beyond Supreme Court Anti-Discrimination: An Essay on Racial Subordinations, Racial Pleasures and Commodified Race." *Columbia Journal of Race and Law* 1 (2011): 273.

_____. "Comparative Racialization: Racial Profiling and the Case of Wen Ho Lee." *UCLA Law Review* 47 (2000): 1689.

_____. "Critical Legal Studies, Critical Race Theory and Asian American Studies." *Amerasia Journal* 21.1-2 (1995): 127-135.

Goto, Courtney. "Beyond the Black-White Binary of U.S. Race Relations: A Next Step in Religious Education." *Religious Education* 112.1 (2017): 33-45.

"Graham Says Country Needs 'Anti-Segregation Legislation.'" *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 27, 1957. https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2205&dat=19570723&id =UuclAAAAIBAJ&sjid=bPUFAAAAIBAJ&pg=2636,4391383

Green, John C. "Exploring the Traditionalist Alliance: Evangelical Protestants, Religious Voters, and the Republican Presidential Vote." In *Evangelicals in Democracy in America,* Volume 1, edited by Steven G. Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel, 117-158. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.

Griffin, Annaliese. "The Climate: New York in 1989." *New York Daily News*, April 8, 2013. http://www.nydailynews.com/services/central-park-five/climate-new-york-1989-article-1.1310861

Grimke, Francis J. "Billy Sunday Cowered before Race Prejudice in Washington." *Chicago Defender*, March 23, 1918.

Hall, Russell E. "American Presbyterian Churches—A Genealogy, 1706-1982." *Journal of Presbyterian History* 60 (1982): 95-128.

Haney Lopez, Ian F. *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

_____. *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* Revised and Updated 10th Edition. New York: NYU Press, 2006.

Hanson, R. Scott. *City of Gods: Religious Freedom, Immigration, and Pluralism in Flushing, Queens*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2016. Kindle edition.

Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness As Property." *Harvard Law Review* 106.8 (1993): 1707-1791.

Hooper, Joseph. "Tim Keller Wants to Save Your Yuppie Soul." *New York Magazine*, November 9, 2009. http://nymag.com/news/features/62374/

Hsu, Madeline Y. *The Good Immigrants: How the Yellow Peril Became the Model Minority*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2015.

Hudnut-Beumler, James. *The Riverside Church in the City of New York*. New York: Riverside Church 1990.

Jeung, Russell. "Evangelical and Mainline Teachings on Asian American Identity." *Semeia* 90/91 (2002): 211-37.

_____. *Faithful Generations: Race and New Asian American Churches*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

Johnston, Robert. "American Evangelicalism: An Extended Family." In *The Variety of American Evangelicalism*, edited by Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston, 252-272. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

Kaemingk, Matthew. "Faith, Work, and Beards: Why Abraham Kuyper Thinks We Need All Three." *Comment,* July 8, 2011. https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/faith-work-and-beards-why-abraham-kuyper-thinks-we-need-all-three/.

Kammer, Jerry. "The Hart-Celler Immigration Act of 1965: Political Figures and Historic Circumstances Produced Dramatic, Unintended Consequences." Center for Immigration Studies, September 30, 2015. https://cis.org/Report/HartCeller-Immigration-Act-1965.

Karpathakis, Anna. "Conclusion: New York City's Religions: Issues of Race, Class, Gender, and Immigration." In *New York Glory: Religions in the City*, edited by Tony Carnes and Anna Karpathakis, 388-394. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001.

Kelling, George L. and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety." *The Atlantic*, March 1982. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/

Kim, Claire Jean. "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans." *Politics and Society* 27.1 (1999): 105-138.

Kim, Rebecca Y. *God's New Whiz Kids: Korean American Evangelicals on Campus*. New York: NYU Press 2006.

_____. "Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals: Ethnic, Multiethinc, or White Campus Ministries?" *Sociology of Religion* 65.1 (2004): 19-34.

Kim, Sharon. *A Faith of Our Own: Second-Generation Spirituality in Korean American Churches*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press 2010.

Kintz, Linda. *Between Jesus and the Market: The Emotions that Matter in Right-Wing America.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.

Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004.

Larson, Edward J. *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*. New York: Basic Books, 1997.

Lawson, R.C. "I Was Glad for Your Sake," *Contender for the Faith* (May 1935).

Leland, John. "New Cultural Approach for Conservative Christians: Reviews, Not Protests." *New York Times*, December 26, 2005. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/26/movies/new-cultural-approach-for-conservative-christians-reviews-not.html

Lindsay, D. Michael. *Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Long, Michael G. *Billy Graham and the Beloved Community: America's Evangelist and the Dream of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006.

Longfield, Bradley J. *Presbyterians and American Culture: A History.* Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.

Lupfer, Jacob. "Why a 'Yes' to Gays Is Often a 'No' to Evangelicalism." *Washington Post*, June 10, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/why-a-yes-to-gays-is-often-a-no-to-evangelicalism-commentary/2015/06/10/d8657e06-0fa6-11e5-a0fe-dccfea4653ee_story.html?utm_term=.5e9b96a87e5d

McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" (1998). In *Understanding Prejudice and Discrimination*, edited by S. Plous, 191-196. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.

Magnum, R. Todd and Mark S. Sweetnam. *The Scofield Bible: Its History and Impact on the Evangelical Church*. Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster Publishing, 2009.

Marsden, George M. *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, Second Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

_____. *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism.* Grand
      Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987.

_____. *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans,
      1991.

Marsden, George M. and Svelmoe, William. L. "Evangelical and Fundamental Christianity."
      In *Encyclopedia of Religion* Second Edition, edited by Lindsay Jones, 2887-2894.
      Detroit: MacMillian Reference USA, 2005.

Marti, Gerardo. *A Mosaic of Believers: Diversity and Innovation in a Multiethnic Church*.
      Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005.

Marty, Martin M. and Jon Butler. "Religion." In *Encyclopedia of New York* 2nd Edition, edited
      by Kenneth Jackson, 1095-1097 (2010).

Massey, Douglas and Nancy Denton. *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the
      Underclass.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993.

Mattingly, Terry. "After 9-11, Evangelicals Heart New York: A Faith-Shaped Trend That Has
      Quietly Emerged in the Big Apple in the Decades Since the Twin Towers Fell." *A
      Journey Through NYC Religions*, September 21, 2011.
      http://www.nycreligion.info/911-evangelicals-heart-york/.

McLoughlin, William. *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham.* New
      York: Ronald Press, 1959.

Melton, J. Gordon. "Father Divine: American Religious Leader." *Encyclopedia Britannica*.
      Accessed on January 27, 2019. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Father-
      Divine.

Migration Policy Institute. "Major US Immigration Laws, 1790 to present." March 2013.
      https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/timeline-1790

Miller, Albert G. "The Rise of African-American Evangelicalism in American Culture." In
      Perspectives on American Religion and Culture, edited by Peter W. Williams, 259-269.
      Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1999.

Miller, Donald E. *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New
      Millennium*. Berkley, CA: University of California Press, 1997.

Miller, Steven. P. *The Age of Evangelicalism: America's Born-Again Years*. New
      York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Mills, Charles W. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Moreton, Bethany. *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Mulder, Mark T. and James K.A. Smith. "Subdivided By Faith? An Historical Account of Evangelicals and the City." *Christian Scholar Review* 38.4 (Summer 2009): 415-434.

Myatt, William. "God in Gotham: Tim Keller's Theology of the City." *Missology* 44.2 (2015): 180-193.

Nichols, Christopher McKnight. "Rethinking Randolph Bourne's Transnational America: How World War I Created an Isolationist Antiwar Pluralism." *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 8.2 (2009): 217-257.

Nayak, Anoop. "Critical Whiteness Studies." *Sociology Compass* 1.2 (2007): 737-755.

Office of the Historian, Department of State of the United States of America. "The Immigration Act of 1924." Accessed on December 6, 2017. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act.

_____. "Secretary of State John Hay and the Open Door in China, 1899-1900." Accessed on December 7, 2017 https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/hay-and-china.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant. *Racial Formation Theory in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s* Second Edition. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Packard, Josh. *The Emerging Church: Religion at the Margins*. Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2012.

Packer, James Innell. *Fundamentalism and the Word of God: Some Evangelical Principles.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *The History of White People.* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010.

Priest, Robert J. and Alvaro L. Nieves, eds. *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity and Christian Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Rah, Soong-Chang. *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.

"Religion: Counting Souls." *Time,* October 4, 1976.

Roberts, Kyle B. *Evangelical Gotham: Religions and the Making of New York City, 1783-1860.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.

Robinson, Natasha Sistrunk. "Being Black, a Woman, and an Evangelilcal." Missio Alliance (Blog). May 23, 2017. http://www.missioalliance.org/black-woman-evangelical/

Russell, C. Allyn. *Voices of American Fundamentalism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.

Rutherford, D. "yuppie, yuppy." *Routledge Dictionary of Economics* Third Edition. London: Routledge, 2013. http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=https://search. credoreference.com/content/entry/routsobk/yuppie_yuppy/0?institutionId=1119.

Sanneh, Lamin. *Whose Religion Is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003.

Schäfer, Axel R. *Countercultural Conservatives: American Evangelicalism from the Postwar Revival to the New Christian Right.* Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011.

Shelton, Jason E. and Michael O. Emerson. *Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions.* New York: NYU Press, 2012.

Singleton, Harry H., III. *White Religion and Black Humanity*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2012.

Smith, Christian. *American Evangelicalism: Embattled and Thriving*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1998.

_____. *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 2000.

Spann, Edward K. *The New Metropolis: New York City, 1840-1857.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

Stackhouse, John Gordon, Jr.. *Evangelical Landscapes: Facing the Critical Issues of the Day*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002.

Stafford, Tim. "How Tim Keller Found Manhattan." *Christianity Today* 53.6 (2009): 20-26.

Steensland, Brian, and Philip Goff, eds. *The New Evangelical Social Engagement.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Strong, Jessi. "Tim Keller." *Bible Study Magazine* 5.3 (2013): 10-13.

Sutton, Matthew Avery. *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Tomasky, Michael. "The Day Everything Changed." *New York*, Sept. 28, 2008. http://nymag.com/anniversary/40th/50652/index4.html.

Thompson, J. Allen, and Timothy Keller. *Redeemer Church Planting Manual*. New York: Redeemer City to City, 2002.

Tierney, John. "What's New York the Capital of Now?" *New York Magazine,* November 20, 1994.

"Times Square Church—The History," YouTube video produced by Times Square Church. Accessed on August 31, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8dUvO0FmsDM.

Todd, J. Terry. "New York, the New Babylon?: Fundamentalism and the Modern City in Reverend Straton's Jazz Age Crusade." In *Faith in the Market: Religion and the Rise of Urban Commercial Culture*, edited by John M. Giggie and Diane Winston, 74-87. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Tranby, Eric and Douglas Hartmann. "Critical Whiteness Theories and the Evangelical 'Race Problem': Extending Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 47.3 (2008): 341-359.

Troy, Gil. *Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2005.

Um, Stephen T., Justin Buzzard, and Tim Keller. *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2013.

Viera, Javier A. "Sexual Ethics and the Church: Overcoming the Conflict of Traditions." STM Thesis, Yale University, 1998.

Vitello, Paul. "Riverside Church Pastor Resigns After 9 Months." *New York Times*, City Room: Blogging from the Five Burroughs. June 30, 2009. https://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/30/riverside-church-pastor-resigns-after-2-months/.

Wacker, Grant. *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014.

Wallis, Jim. *America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2015.

Warfield, B.B. "Apologetics." Accessed on January 22, 2019. https://reformed.org/apologetics/index.html. Originally published in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, edited by Samuel Macauley Jackson, ed., 232-238. New York: Funk and Wagnalis Company, 1908.

Warner, R. Stephen. "Evangelicals of the 1970s and 2010s: What's the Same, What's Different, and What's Urgent." In *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*, edited by Brian Steensland and Philip Goff, 280-291. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Watt, David Harrington, *Bible-Carrying Christians: Conservative Protestants and Social Power*. New York: Oxford University Press 2002.

Weisenfeld, Judith. *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration.* New York: NYU Press, 2016.

Wilcox, W. Bradford. "How Focused on the Family? Evangelical Protestants, the Family, and Sexuality." In *Evangelicals in Democracy in America,* Volume 1, edited by Steven G. Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel, 251-275. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.

Wildman, Stephanie M. and Adrienne D. Davis. "Language and Silence: Making Systems of Privilege Visible" (1996). In *Critical Race Theory: The Cutting Edge*, 794-800. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.

Wilford, Justin. *Sacred Subdivisions: The Postsuburban Transformation of American Evangelicalism*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Williams, Daniel K. *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Winkelman, Joel M. "Herbert Croly on Work and Democracy." *Polity* 44.1 (2012): 81-105.

Wolfe, Alan. "Sunday Book Review: Evangelicals Everywhere." *New York Times*, November 25, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/25/books/review/Wolfe-t.html.

_____. *The Transformation of American Religion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Worthen, *Apostles of Reason: The Crisis of Authority in American Evangelicalism*, Kindle Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Wu, Frank H. "The Moral Dilemma of Honorary Whiteness: A Comment on Asian Americans and Affirmative Action." *UCLA Asian Pacific American Law Journal* 20.1 (2015): 25-30.

Wunderink, Susan. "Tim Keller Reasons with America." *Christianity Today* (June 2008): 38-39.

Wuthnow, Robert. *The Restructuring of American Religion.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

_____. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

_____. "The Cultural Capital of American Evangelicalism." In *Evangelicals in Democracy in America,* Volume 1, edited by Steven G. Brint and Jean Reith Schroedel, 27-43. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2009.

Yancy, George, ed. *What White Looks Like: African American Philosophers on the Whiteness Question.* New York: Routledge, 2004.

Yong, Amos. "The Future of Evangelical Theology: Asian and Asian American Interrogations." *Asia Journal of Theology* 21.2 (2007): 371-397.

Zylstra, Sarah Eekhoff. "The Life and Times of Redeemer Presbyterian Church." The Gospel Coalition. May 22, 2017. https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/life-and-times-of-redeemer-presbyterian-church.