



# CHRISTUS CULTURA

The Journal of Christianity in the Social Sciences



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## Mission Statement

Our mission at *Christus Cultura* is to explore and highlight in innovative, cutting-edge ways the intersection of Christian faith and the human experience as expressed in the study of the social sciences, including history, political science, psychology, sociology, criminology, international studies, Christian and missionary studies, and much more.

## Vision

To that end, contributors to this journal present original research and solicited items—from articles and essays to book reviews and commentaries—on issues important to the Christian life as it is experienced now, in the past, or could be experienced in the future. Our scope is intentionally broad, both in terms of geography and time, as well as in content, because we seek to provide readers with a rich mosaic of the ways in which the influence of a single man, a humble carpenter from Nazareth, has continued to shape the human experience, society, and culture in profound ways. It is our sincere desire that readers will find the journal rewarding and spiritually life-enriching and that the content presented will serve, whether in profound or subtle ways, as a vehicle of the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:16-20*).

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## Letter from the Editor

Greetings, Dear Readers!

The publication of this edition, the fifth, of our *Christus Cultura: The Journal of Christianity in the Social Sciences* highlights the scholarly work of our colleagues at Evangelical Christian universities. Their research accomplishments and insights into human issues deserve commendation, and we are proud that these scholars sought out our publication to share their ideas with the broader Christian community.

Given the broad focus of our journal in the social sciences, many interesting issues are addressed in this edition, including peacemaking, the psychology of racial trauma, the Christian worldview of Patrick Henry, and the insights of the Gospel of John in redemption. It is our sincere hope that readers find these articles just as stimulating as the editors did.

On a broader note, this year has certainly presented new challenges not only in academia but in society and the world at large. Our world has seen much pain: the war between Russian and Ukraine has intensified; the geopolitical situation has turned frightful, and domestic politics have become as divisive as ever.

Nonetheless, we must remember to trust in God, who will see us all through the storms we encounter in life.

As Dr. Linebach stated in the first letter in our inaugural edition:

We, as believers, must keep our final destination in mind in all things, great and small. That destination will be a place of the fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11), a place with no more death or mourning (Revelation 21:4), and a place with no more crying or pain (Revelation 21:4). Given these marvelous promises of the age to come, we long for that time. Though we are not there yet, we can train our thoughts to be heavenward. “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things (Philippians 4:8, ESV). It is our right and privilege as believers to be able to focus on the things above. It is our goal with this journal to help shed an eternal light on events and phenomena in this world.

In Christ,

Charlie Carter  
Shorter University  
Rome, GA  
April 21, 2023

## Peacemakers

Dustin Addison, Ph.D.  
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Law enforcement officers are regarded in many different ways concerning the meaning of the profession or the use for law enforcement in civil society. Law enforcement officers transgress through many trials and tribulations for the very nature of righteous protection of the people through serving God. In many instances, law enforcement officers are seen as heroes by way of selfless people who will stand up when others will not (Karpik, 2010). In other perspectives, people see law enforcement officers as a hindrance to civilian freedoms. The Bible teaches people well concerning peacemaking. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9, ESV). Police officers are peacemakers who put their life on the line to protect innocent people. However, are there officers who do not act within the interest of the Bible and act in a wicked manner? People act in their own best interest, and police officers are no exception to the perception of

one's best interest. However, with the teachings of the Bible, there is a higher likelihood of righteous behaviors within law enforcement and a more civilized society.

### Law Enforcement

What is law enforcement, and how does this enforcement translate to a biblical perspective through generations? The federal government defines law enforcement as a generic name for an organization or agency that maintains public order in the enforcement of laws through prevention, detection, and investigations (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2020). Considering the very definition of law enforcement is maintaining order or peace, the Bible gives a perspective of law enforcement officers, "For he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer" (Romans 13:4, ESV). Law enforcement officers are needed to maintain order and promote the good in society. However, why is law enforcement so problematic from a societal perspective?

### Societal Perspective on Law Enforcement

As time progresses, there is a constant change in perspectives in which a person thinks or reacts to situations surrounding their environment. Support from the public on law enforcement is needed for a law enforcement agency to be productive and successful in protecting peace (Miller et al., 2004). In many instances, the public's perspective of law enforcement officers relies on person-to-person contact. However, in today's time, there is a large amount of influence on perspectives through media. Unlike in the past, most humans have a way of communicating and therefore share opinions; many are not fact-checked and grow within people's perspectives based on opinion rather than facts. Throughout several decades there have been constant patterns of shifts in the

perspective of law enforcement. However, there is stabilization from the perspective of law enforcement, and if destabilization occurs, there is noticeable media coverage involving law enforcement (Miller et al., 2004).

Today, there are different views on law enforcement integrity and service throughout the world. There is speculation that to increase a positive societal perspective on law enforcement, there must be a constant improvement of service among policing agencies. Considering the volatile climate of the perspective of the police, one can surmise that it is much easier to damage the relationship between civilians and police than it is to correct the damage (Myhill & Bradford, 2012). One of the main drivers of civilian perceptions of police is the contact with police officers rather than the outcome of the criminal justice system as a whole (Myhill & Bradford, 2012). To help create positive perceptions, there must be positive contact with civilians within the communities. How can officers create a positive connection with civilians, and are there just too many unjust police to complete this task?

### **Unjust Law Enforcement**

One of the main aspects that make way for the negative perception of law enforcement is law enforcement officers being unjust. However, it is essential to understand what an unjust officer is and at what rate the officers use unjust manners to enforce the laws. Being just is the central aspect needed to be a law officer. The Bible helps us understand being just and completely moral within one's mindset, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (Timothy 2:15, ESV). Law enforcement officers are humans, and humans tend to act in their best interest by nature (Sapolsky, 2017). However, with the teaching of the Bible, one can combat the need to act in one's best interest. Law enforcement

officers, unlike many other people, are in situations that can provide many opportunities to act in one's own best interest while not in society's interest. Often, officers see instances of unjust behaviors from the overall population but are never to partake in the unjust behaviors.

There are unjust law enforcement officers. However, what causes these unjust practices, and can these practices be mitigated long term to help the law enforcement system obtain a view among the public as beneficent? Stress is one of the major elements that leads to questionable actions by law enforcement officers. Within a policing organization, several stressors, such as the paramilitary and bureaucratic nature of the organizations, have significant effects on police officers (Ménard & Arter, 2013). Due to the very nature of a law enforcement job with a large number of stressors, there is a higher probability of normal thinking patterns being affected, which can lead to unjust actions. However, law enforcement officers are peacemakers who should use the teachings of the Bible to create a righteous path.

### **Law Enforcement Officers as Peacemakers**

Law enforcement has changed over the years from peacekeeping to peacemaking and paramilitary organizational strategies to help mitigate wrongful actions within communities worldwide. There are several different names for the phases in which police agencies have transgressed, such as political entrenchment, reform efforts, and professional and public community relations (Bush & Dodson, 2014). Throughout the decades, policing has changed several times to implement a focus on relations and communities. What is the purpose of peacemaking within a community rather than peacekeeping? In many instances, peacemaking can help facilitate a better understanding of police intervention in civilians' daily lives (Bush & Dodson, 2014). There will be a constant battle to obtain peace

within policing agencies as well as overall communities. “Strive for peace with everyone and for holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14, ESV). There must be a pursuit of peace within law enforcement agencies.



## Peacemaking

Peacemaking is an understanding that one must pursue the act of peace among all people. A considerable amount of information regarding the creation of peace and the pursuit of people can be seen throughout Christianity, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, ESV). There must be an understanding of peacemaking to obtain peacemaking within an agency and throughout a community. Peacemaking is a way of thinking and acting rather than just a perspective (Bush & Dodson, 2014). To understand peacemaking, there must be connectedness, care, and mindfulness (Bush & Dodson, 2014).

How will an agency create care within the community to be deemed peacemakers? Care is referred to as the feminine approach to relationships and the concerns of others (Bush & Dodson, 2014). One can argue that rules and laws hinder certain people within communities, creating a problematic atmosphere for peacemaking. However, rules

and laws are needed to make a more civilized society, which is the greatest contribution to lowering violent criminal actions (Pinker, 2011). Whenever there is an implementation of caring within a policing organization, there is a higher probability of considering others within the community and less likelihood of discrimination (Bush & Dodson, 2014).

Mindfulness means understanding the needs of others and is the overall consideration when creating strategies to combat criminal actions. Whenever a person has mindfulness of others, there is an understanding of not only the personal desires of others but also the sense of self (Bush & Dodson, 2014). Whenever there is a consideration of mindfulness, there is emotional intelligence regarding the perspectives of others. If there is an understating of perspective through emotional intelligence that can be formed within the policies of an organization, there is a higher likelihood the organization will have the ability to create peace rather than maintain peace. To give an agency the ability to create the intelligence needed for peacemaking, four different perspectives are needed due to human nature: a warrior, a healer, a visionary, and a teacher.

The warrior perspective allows law enforcement officers to show up and be present with active participation to create peace (Bush & Dodson, 2014). The healer is an extension of the warrior aspect by paying attention to and gaining empathy surrounding the citizens to help understand feelings, concerns, and inserts within the community (Bush & Dodson, 2014). The third aspect in the creation of peacemaking is the visionary. There should not be blame or judgment when making decisions. With the overall changing perspective of the people surrounding police officers, the truth should never be a factor when contemplating the peacemaking efforts of police agencies. When an officer decides to make an arrest, there should not be any

judgment, only the truth surrounding the decision, which will help in the perspective of the judge and jury when a person is within the criminal justice system (Bush & Dodson, 2014). The fourth aspect is the teacher. There must always be a transition to the outcome of every situation. However, it is crucial not to be attached to all outcomes in any given situation to remain open-minded (Bush & Dodson, 2014). To be successful within the teacher's perspective is to have a constant reminder that the officer is but a small part of the broader view of the criminal justice system (Bush & Dodson, 2014). Peacemaking is a just way to police and enforces laws within a community to bring a perspective of righteousness and God within all lives.

### Conclusion

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (Matthew 5:9, ESV). Law enforcement officers are peacemakers. However, there is a stray perspective that law enforcement officers do not create peace but rather maintain peace. The new societal perspective of police officers being unjust in their actions is due to media outlets creating differentiating coverage of negative content with very little positive coverage of law enforcement officers. However, there could be a new strategy to help agencies create a higher probability of peace rather than trying to maintain peace of past perspectives. Considering perspective change, there must be care and mindfulness to create community relations, which can lead to peacemaking, "And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful" (Colossians 3:15, ESV). There will always be perspectival change, but with the teaching of the Bible being at the heart of all peacemaking, there will be a higher likelihood of righteous decisions that will create, instill,

and maintain peacemaking within law enforcement.

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# Healing Racial Trauma: A Critical Analysis of Literature

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The purpose of this critical analysis of literature was to review current research on racial trauma, to synthesize which tools and strategies are effective in contributing to the individual and collective healing of racial trauma for people of color, specifically African Americans, and provide implications for members of the helping profession. Using Thematic Analysis, this article will amalgamate the results of the conducted literature review into central themes that emerged. Thematic Analysis is a type of qualitative analysis that is used to present themes and patterns (Alhojailanm, 2012). It provides a systematic component to data analysis and allows the researcher to connect an analysis of the frequency of a theme or pattern with one of the whole content (Alhojailanm, 2012). It is important to consider if there are effective tools and strategies to assess and treat racial trauma. Throughout this critical analysis, several significant findings surfaced. These findings have been synthesized into three prominent themes regarding racial trauma: increase in negative mental health outcomes after experiencing a racial encounter, barriers to healing racial trauma, and frameworks for healing/addressing racial trauma.

## Increase in Negative Mental Health Outcomes after Experiencing a Racial Encounter

A prominent theme that was evident throughout literature was an increase in negative mental health outcomes after experiencing a racial encounter. All of the research analyzed revealed that experiences of racism contribute to increased mental health issues among African Americans. Historically, African American adults who have experienced a racial encounter are more vulnerable to experiencing prolonged grief, loss of spirituality, paranoia, low self-worth, self-hatred, anger, and aggression as well as elevated risks for domestic violence, physical abuse, sexual abuse, substance abuse and dependence (Danzer et al., 2016). When African American adults experience trauma related to race, they are more likely to endure behavioral and/or personality-related changes that are persistent and ongoing (Nadal et al., 2019). Research reveals empirical evidence supporting the association between experiences of racism and depression among African Americans (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Chae et al. (2021) also found that racism during the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased levels of depression and anxiety in African American communities.

## Barriers to Healing Racial Trauma

Five of the articles used for this critical analysis exposed the barriers to healing racial trauma as a recurring theme throughout. Research supports that racism and discriminatory racial encounters have a history of producing psychological and emotional harm (Nadal et al., 2019). Past research reveals survivors of racism, like survivors of other traumas, experience the racist event as negative, sudden, and uncontrollable; however, race-based stressors have yet to be included in the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual* (5th ed.; DSM-5; American Psychiatric

Association, 2013) (Danzer et al., 2016). Not all racial traumas would be considered for a Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) diagnosis due to the rigid definitions of trauma within the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) resulting in ineffective responses and/or treatment from practitioners working with people who are suffering from racial trauma (Nadal et al., 2019). Another major barrier is the stigma associated with mental health and mental illness. African Americans are often unwilling to engage in therapy because of historically ingrained beliefs that one should solve one's own problems and seeking therapy is evidence of weakness (Danzer et al., 2016). In addition to the stigma associated with therapy, shame and silence may also inhibit recovery and healing (Danzer et al., 2016). A paramount barrier to healing racial trauma is the White supremacist belief system that operates within psychology and helping profession (Wilcox, 2022). Wilcox (2022) argued that psychologists and other members of the helping profession are unable to address racial trauma in psychotherapy because the profession has internalized White supremacy, leaving practitioners inadequately prepared.

### **Frameworks for Healing/Addressing Racial Trauma**

Racial trauma is experienced in many ways which can make it difficult to effectively address negative race-based encounters. A major theme that emerged during this critical analysis of literature was frameworks for healing and/or addressing racial trauma. Ten of the articles reviewed explicitly detailed frameworks for healing and/or addressing racial trauma. Hargons et al. (2021) proposed that before responding to or addressing racial trauma, it is important to understand an individual's personal definition of racial trauma. Wilcox (2022) presented a framework that is grounded in structural analysis and

radical healing from White supremacy that urges members of the helping profession to move beyond multiculturalism. In order to effectively address and heal racial trauma, members of the helping profession must move from a cultural frame to a structural frame of reference, accept and deeply integrate the research and information given by Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) scholars and practitioners, and psychology must heal itself (Wilcox, 2022). To combat the negative impact of racism and development of racial trauma, Mosley et al. (2021) presented the critical consciousness of anti-Black racism (CCABR) model. The CCABR model is the first to investigate the processes involved in cultivating critical consciousness related to anti-Black racism (ABR) (Mosley et al., 2021). CCABR involves witnessing, processing, and responding to anti-Black racism. CCABR is a specific process that promotes resistance to and prevention of racial trauma (Mosley et al., 2021). The Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale (TSDS) was presented as a tool to assess discriminatory distress and anxiety-related trauma symptoms. The TSDS is a 21-item self-report measure that focuses on anxiety-related trauma symptoms encompassing the occurrence of discrimination including avoidance, negative cognitions, social fears, and worries about the future. The TSDS was found to be a reliable tool for clinicians to utilize to assess racial trauma in African Americans (Williams et al., 2018).

Another framework presented in literature to be effective in healing and/or addressing racial trauma is the notion of active coping. Developing active coping strategies in response to racism may protect against mental illness associated with racial discrimination (Lui et al., 2022). Active coping with racial discrimination through positive thinking was associated with fewer mental health symptoms in African American women (Loyd et al., 2022). Positive thinking can help reject

negative racial stereotypes as well as societal prejudice for African American women (Loyd et al., 2022). Another form of active coping is participation in activist movements.

Participating in activist movements such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) in response to racism channels the hazards of racism into a greater empowerment and is related to lower mental illness risk among African Americans (Lui et al., 2022).

To enhance psychological well-being, and provide a sense of control and self-efficacy, microinterventions are presented in literature as a framework for addressing racial microaggressions which lead to racial trauma (Sue et al., 2019). Microinterventions are interpersonal tools that are meant to neutralize, modify, or prevent racial microaggressions by subtly or explicitly confronting and educating the perpetrator with the strategic goals of making the invisible visible, disarming the microaggression, educating the offender, and seeking external reinforcement or support (Sue et al., 2019). Although some may perceive microinterventions to be minuscule actions that possibly underestimate the nature of racism, research has proposed that they have a profound impact by producing a societal climate in public forums, employment settings, and educational institutions that foster the positive and oppose the negative (Sue et al., 2019). Similar to microinterventions are racial microaffirmations. Racial microaffirmations are subtle verbal and non-verbal approaches People of Color utilize that affirm each other's dignity, integrity, and shared humanity (Pérez Huber et al., 2021). Racial microaffirmations buffer adverse effects of racial microaggressions and resist the harmful impact of racism (Pérez Huber et al., 2021).

Racial Encounter Coping Appraisal Theory (RECAST) was devised to describe the intricacies of the racial socialization process for African Americans (Comas-Díaz

et al., 2019). RECAST contemplates the roles of racial socializations and racial coping processing in understanding the experiences in discriminatory racial encounters of African Americans (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

Healing Ethno-Racial Trauma (HEART) is an intersectional framework that has proven to be effective in stimulating healing from racial trauma (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

HEART is comprised of intersectionality theory, trauma-informed care, and liberation psychology and has been used in treating individuals suffering from racial trauma (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). To move beyond a solely individualistic approach to healing racial trauma, Chioneso et al. (2020) presented the Community Healing and Resistance Through Storytelling (C-HeARTS) framework. The C-HeARTS framework encompasses three major components: justice as both a condition of and a consequence of community healing, culturally syntonc practices such as storytelling and resistance that direct the recounting of trauma and act as channels for transformation and psychological dimensions such as connectedness, collective memory, and critical consciousness that encourage justice-informed conclusions (Chioneso et al., 2020).

### **Outcomes**

For this critical analysis of literature, only 18 of 43 reviewed articles were included. Seven were excluded due to the study being focused on children and adolescents, 14 were excluded due to having a publication date prior to 2018, and four were excluded because the studies did not include African American adults. Based on the results of the literature reviewed for this critical analysis, racial trauma is prevalent and detrimental to African American adults. The themes of the literature reviewed are interrelated and all reveal a need for racial healing. The research exposes the challenges of healing racial trauma while presenting practical steps to overcoming the

challenges. It is clear that in moving forward, there will have to be difficult conversations regarding the healing of racial trauma and implications for members of the helping profession. It is expected that these conversations will be uncomfortable and may elicit resistance from current and future members of the helping the profession. However, in order to promote and encourage healing from racial trauma, the current state of the psychology profession must be reimagined. There will also need to be a willingness and intentionality on the part of African Americans and society as a whole. Although individual healing is crucial, community healing is just as critical.

Ultimately, the outcomes regarding healing racial trauma are complex and multidimensional. However, if ignored the effects of racial trauma will continue to be detrimental to African Americans and other people of color. Having an awareness of the increase in mental illness after experiences of a racial encounter, understanding barriers to healing racial trauma and utilizing effective frameworks when addressing and treating racial trauma can all make a positive impact.

### **Section Summary**

This section synthesized the findings of the literature review using thematic analysis.

Thematic Analysis provides an opportunity to comprehend the potential of any issue more extensively (Alhojailanm, 2012). By using thematic analysis there is the opportunity to connect various concepts and opinions and compare them with data that has been collected in various situations at different times (Alhojailanm, 2012). The findings were grouped into three interrelated themes: increase in negative mental health outcomes after experiencing a racial encounter, barriers

to healing racial trauma, and frameworks for healing/addressing racial trauma. These themes help to deepen the understanding of the prevalence of racial trauma as well as the dangers of racial trauma if it goes unhealed. Implications for assessing, treating and healing racial trauma will be discussed in the following section.

### **Discussion**

The following section provides a discussion on racial trauma and current tools and strategies that are effective in contributing to the individual and collective healing of racial trauma for African American adults. This article will answer the research questions for this study, provide implications for members of the helping profession, Christian integration, and reveal gaps in research and implications for future research.

Racism functions in all levels of society and is conveyed in ideologies, inter and intragroup dynamics and institutional disparities (Danzer et al., 2016). As recently as January 2023, the world witnessed another traumatic murder of an African American man, Tyre Nichols, by police officers. Mr. Nichols was beaten excessively and afforded no level of compassion which resulted in his death three days after the incident (Yearwood, 2023). He had not committed a crime and was not given a reason for the traffic stop; the officers pulled him from his car in an overly aggressive manner and never afforded him the opportunity for dialogue or rationale (Yearwood, 2023). Lynching, shooting, beating, choking, and tazing are just some of the ways in which African Americans have been murdered, maimed and rendered powerless within the United States (Yearwood, 2023).

The anger, sadness, anxiety, apathy, depression, and hopelessness felt after being vicariously traumatized by this racist event only proves that there is more to do to prevent

these experiences from reoccurring. Although there is an understanding that racism will never be eradicated, there are intentional things that can be done to thwart the prevalence and intensity of racial trauma. Repeated instances of racism further support the need for professionals and scholars alike to understand the intensity of racial trauma and provide methods and strategies to effectively address and promote racial healing individually and collectively.

### **What is the current state of literature regarding racial trauma experienced by African American Adults?**

The current state of literature regarding racial trauma experienced by African Americans is developing. There is a plethora of research regarding racism and its effect on victims but not as much when comes specifically to racial trauma. Racial trauma, originally coined as *race-based stress*, is beginning to be more prevalent throughout academia due to a recent increase in anti-black racist attacks (Chae et al., 2021).

Racism has the potential to be life threatening to African American adults due to constant exposure to racial microaggressions, vicarious racism, and the invisibility of racial trauma's historical roots (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). This collective racial trauma can cause detrimental wounds for those who are dehumanized (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Racial trauma erodes cultural identity and contains psychological and physiological consequences such as hypervigilance to threat, flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance, suspiciousness, and somatic expressions such as headaches and heart palpitations (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019).

Racism has produced excess deaths in African American communities ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic to racially motivated murders of African Americans and police brutality (Chae et al., 2021). This volatile

period is a significant point of global reckoning with structural/systemic racism and the various ways it emerges (Chae et al., 2021). Acts of racism against African American adults have been prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic and have grown increasingly visible via social media which also serves as a platform for expressing racist sentiment (Chae et al., 2021). Racially motivated attacks and other racial injustices have extensive adverse population-level health implications and may constitute a source of personal danger even for African American adults not being directly targeted (Chae et al., 2021). Racism during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased levels of depression and anxiety in African American adults allowing researchers to conclude that antiracism policies and practices should be implemented as part of a public health strategy (Chae et al., 2021).

There are various ways in which racism continues to manifest in modern society contributing to the prevalence of overt and intentional interpersonal racial discrimination (Nadal et al., 2019). Research has established that African American college students face negative health outcomes associated with racism (Lui et al., 2022). African American college students' experiences of racial discrimination was associated with increased reports of depression (Lui et al., 2022). Scholars have discovered that active coping can improve negative mental health outcomes (Lui et al., 2022).

Discrimination research reveals that African American adults are commonly and frequently subjected to racial discrimination at the individual, interpersonal, and structural levels (Loyd et al., 2022). However, few researchers study the effect of racial discrimination specifically on African American girls and women throughout their lifespan (Loyd et al., 2022). Some researchers argue that experiences with racism at various

stages can have differential effects which could exacerbate health outcomes (Loyd et al., 2022). African American women are regrettably impacted by multiple forms of oppression while internalizing the stereotype of the *strong black woman* which leads to decreased support seeking and self-care and increased negative mental health outcomes (Loyd et al., 2022).

Despite the likely benefits of clinical intervention, racial trauma has received insufficient acknowledgment in research and clinical literature (Williams et al., 2018). Racial trauma surpasses individual experiences as it encompasses cultural trauma (Williams et al., 2018). Unlike PTSD, racial trauma comprises a broader range of symptoms such as paranoia, avoidance of dominant group members, somatic complaints, and excessive worries about loved ones (Williams et al., 2018). Literature reveals that, different from PTSD, racial trauma focuses on the cumulative effect of constant experiences of racism, and historical and generational experiences of racism that are not captured in the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (Mosley et al., 2021).

### **How effective are current evidence-based treatments for addressing/healing racial trauma experienced by African American adults?**

Current evidence-based treatments for addressing and/or healing racial trauma experienced by African Americans are scarce. Many of the treatment methods currently used to treat racial trauma are ineffective due to them being geared towards treatment for PTSD (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). This could be due in part to the DSM-5's (American Psychiatric Association, 2013) exclusion of racial trauma as a recognized diagnosis" (Williams et al., 2018). However, as research surrounding racial trauma advances, treatments are being developed to promote

both individual and collective healing (Chioneso et al., 2020).

Healing racial trauma is challenging because racial injuries transpire within a sociopolitical context and on an ongoing basis (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Countless researchers and experts have developed psychological methods to help individuals recover from racial trauma that include psychotherapy, group counseling, community methods, ethnopolitical interventions (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). However, current classifications of trauma, traumatic stress, and traumatic treatment are grounded in European perceptions which cause the treatments to lack cultural relevance for most African American adults (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Members of the helping profession should be conscious of the prevalence of racist incidents experienced by African American adults and ensure that they are adequately prepared to address racial trauma.

(Giordano et al., 2021). The expert's response to an account of racism is an important component of the treatment and healing process (Giordano et al., 2021).

Psychology neglects to address healing racial trauma because it sanitizes White supremacist patriarchal capitalism and other systems of oppression to multiculturalism and cultural differences (Wilcox, 2022). In so doing, psychology downgrades racial trauma to a niche interest irrelevant to the general practice of psychotherapy (Wilcox, 2022). By remaining in this state, it is impossible for members of the helping profession to effectively address racial trauma and provide adequate mental healthcare (Wilcox, 2022). Wilcox (2022) challenged members of the helping profession to move from a cultural framework to a structural frame of reference, accept and integrate ideas and frameworks from scholars and practitioners of color, and that psychology must heal itself from being deeply rooted in the norms of White

supremacy to effectively address racial trauma and participate in the promotion of racial healing.

In identifying factors that protect mental health in African American women, Loyd et al. (2022), explained how experiences with racism negatively affected mental well-being. There is a direct psychological benefit to coping with racial discrimination through positive thinking (Loyd et al., 2022). Teaching African American women to cope with racial discrimination through positive thinking was connected with a decrease in mental health symptoms and allowed for rejection of negative racial stereotypes and societal prejudice (Loyd et al., 2022).

In spite of the benefits that may come with using an assessment measuring trauma symptoms resulting from discrimination, few effective instruments exist (Williams et al., 2018). Tools used to assess PTSD are not appropriate to use to measure racial trauma due to the exclusion of a range of discriminatory experiences (Williams et al., 2018). Current measures of racism-related stress, such as the Race-Based Traumatic Stress Symptom Scale (RBTSSS), General Ethnic Discrimination Scale (GEDS), and Racial Microaggression Scale (RMAS) offer information relative to frequency and related anguish linked to discrimination but may not indicate racial trauma or conventional trauma-related clusters (Williams et al., 2018). Hence, there remains a demand for a short, effective screening tool for racial trauma (Williams et al., 2018).

The Trauma Symptoms of Discrimination Scale (TSDS) is a measure of discriminatory distress with an emphasis on anxiety-related trauma symptoms in African Americans (Williams et al., 2018). The TSDS is a 21-item self-report measure that centers on anxiety-related trauma symptoms surrounding the encounter of discrimination including avoidance, negative cognitions,

social fears, and worries about the future (Williams et al., 2018). TSDS is designed to capture trauma responses to any type of discrimination, but it is predominantly sensitive to encapsulating racial trauma in African Americans (Williams et al., 2018). Applying assessment instruments like the TSDS in the therapeutic process can assist clinicians in identifying and observing changes in traumatization symptoms (Williams et al., 2018).

As a result of the harmful effects of racial trauma on African Americans, interventions that promote the resistance and prevention of racism are needed (Mosley et al., 2021). Critical consciousness of anti-Black racism (CCABR) is a strategy in which African American adults can not only cope with, but prevent and resist racial trauma (Mosley et al., 2021). Critical consciousness is when a person becomes conscious of and meticulously problematizes their lived experience and sociopolitical environments and then participates in actions in response to their critical reflection (Mosley et al., 2021). By developing critical consciousness, individuals and collectives can work intentionally and methodically towards healing and protection from racial trauma (Mosley et al., 2021). CCABR is an empirically grounded model conveying how African Americans cultivate into activists battling for Black liberation and racial healing in an intersectional manner (Mosley et al., 2021).

The psychological literature about racial trauma primarily reflects individual processes surrounding healing racial trauma (Chioneso et al., 2020). Moving beyond an individualistic approach, Chioneso et al. (2020), presented a framework to promote community healing. Both family and community-oriented research that focuses on racial trauma acknowledge the importance of personal healing strategies as well as collective healing processes (Chioneso et al.,

2020). Research explains that the community healing framework emphasizes communal responsibility and progresses a critical consciousness that rejects disempowerment using culturally restorative practices to empower self-determined realities (Chioneso et al., 2020). The Community Healing and Resistance Through Storytelling (C-HeARTS) framework is a culturally syntonic healing framework relating to racial trauma that emphasizes justice informed outcomes established in psychology and health literature (Chioneso et al., 2020). This framework should enable African Americans to transform oppressive systems by acknowledging racial trauma (Chioneso et al., 2020).

### **Implications and Christian Integration**

Racial trauma has collective ramifications because its consequences go beyond the afflicted person to affect communities of color (Comas-Díaz et al., 2019). Members of the helping profession can integrate the finding from this research into their professional work. They can review the information provided as the first step in gaining an understanding of racial trauma and its detrimental effects on African American adults. A critical issue with which psychology must contend to move forward is the shared adopted White supremacist patriarchal capitalism as a

profession (Wilcox, 2022). Members of the helping profession can be intentional in

discovering their own biases and prejudices and seeking out proper training to help them to address and develop effective interventions when a client presents with racial trauma. One of the most powerful things that members of the helping profession can do is promote the addition of racial trauma to the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The exclusion of racial trauma as a diagnosis will only continue to provide

barriers to African American adults seeking healing and racial reconciliation.

“Do not take advantage of foreigners in your land; do not wrong them. They must be treated like any other citizen; love them as yourself . . .” (Leviticus 19:33-34 NIV). Despite the very nature of Christianity that bids Christians to be a countervoice in the world against evil, many have yielded to countless traumas of racism in the world and in the Church (Brown, 2019). The Christian church has not been exempt to racism and, in many ways, may have made it effortless for its members to profess Christianity while remaining bigoted and supportive of racist and discriminatory structures and systems (Brown, 2019). Recent research suggests that, for White Americans, commingling national and religious group identities is intensely connected with racism, prompting some to contend that assertions about Christianity being essential to American identity are practically about reinforcing White supremacy (Perry & Whitehead, 2019). Martin Luther King Jr. habitually challenged America to live up to its professed Christian identity and stressed that America’s Christian ideals would only be truly achieved by racial justice resulting from structural and systemic policy changes (Perry & Whitehead, 2019).

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me’” (Matthew 25:40 NIV). It is ironic that in the American Christian church, those most outspoken against perceived immoral behavior often continue to turn a blind eye to racism or willing stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation (Brown, 2019). If the Christian church wants to be true disciples of Jesus, they must acknowledge the trauma and oppression that is plaguing their brothers and sisters. After acknowledgement, there must be a call to action for the body of believers to truly start being the hands and feet of Jesus in the earth. The work of eliminating racism and

promoting racial healing in the Church and in society will require trailblazing efforts by both majority White congregations and by individual White Christians (Brown, 2019). It is time for the true followers of Christ to take a stand.

### **Gaps and Implications for Future Research**

This critical analysis of literature focused primarily on African American adults but can be applied to other marginalized groups. A major gap noted in the research was children from marginalized groups and the effects that historical trauma and vicarious racism has on their development. Another gap in research is the differing of experiences of racial trauma from American born Black people as opposed to Black people currently living in America (i.e., Jamaican, Haitian, African, etc.).

With the ease of accessibility via social media and the Internet, younger children are being exposed and experiencing race-based traumas at an alarming rate. Future research should examine the effects of racial trauma on children and how it affects them developmentally and throughout their lifespan. Future research should also look at the intersectionality of race, religion and sexual orientation on how racial trauma is perceived and experienced. Members of various marginalized groups may experience racial trauma and present in conflicting ways.

Future researchers should also be intentional in the timeframe of conducting the research. It would be interesting to see the effects of racial trauma directly after a racist attack as opposed to months or even years after the incident. Observing immediate responses and reactions to racial trauma and comparing it to responses and reactions when the exposure is no longer fresh will add value to developing effective interventions and strategies to promote healing.

### **Article Summary**

History will recall the issues we decided to change in our profession and history will also remember the status quo we resolved to not question and continue to sustain in our profession (Wilcox, 2022). As evidenced by research, racism is not a recent phenomenon and has historically plagued African American adults. In 2015, the Institute for the Study and Promotion of Race and Culture explicitly declared that racial trauma is real (Mosley et al., 2021). This critical analysis illuminated the need for not only racial trauma to be added to the *DSM-5* (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), but for clinicians to actively seek effective interventions and strategies to address racial trauma and promote healing. Members of the helping profession are entangled in society and institutions and are thus just as likely to harbor biases, interpersonal, and internalized racism as anyone else (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021). The goal of this study was to synthesize literature in a way that provided concrete steps for members of the helping profession to actively participate in racial reconciliation.

Recent racist events in the United States have focused the attention of much of the world on the intense impact of racism on the lives and mental health of communities of color (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021). As members of the helping profession, it would be unethical to turn a blind eye to this public health crisis. Although we are powerless as it pertains to eradicating racism, we can be powerful in bringing awareness and promoting the conversations that are needed to move in a better direction. Tackling racism and racial discrimination in psychiatry necessitates an open and honest discussion about the ills of racism and how to properly address them (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021).

According to the United States Department of Justice (2022) in 2021 there

were 7,262 hate crime incidents involving 8,673 offenses. Of these offenses, 64.8% were based on race and ethnicity. The prevalence rate of hate crimes in conjunction with the prevalence rate of African American adults experiencing racial trauma further support the need for a call to action. Identifying and citing racism in work, writing, research, and in interactions of mental health professionals with patients and colleagues will advance the understanding racial trauma, racial healing and combat racism (Schouler-Ocak et al., 2021).

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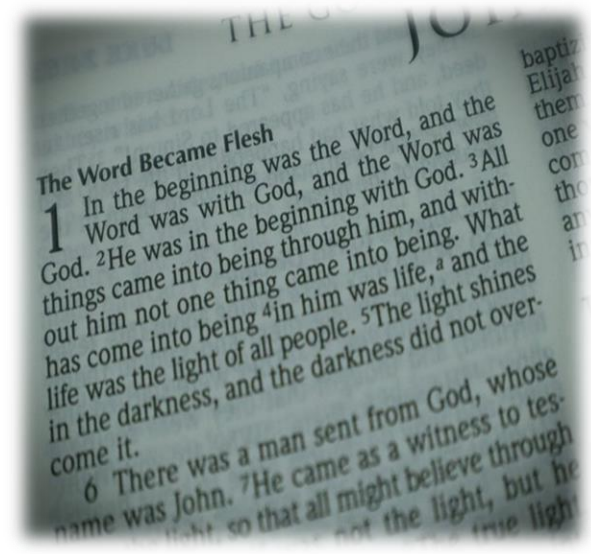
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## The Identity Shaping Rhetoric of John: Hope for the Overcomer

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### Introduction

Biblical writers often wrote for the purpose of evoking an identity shift in their readers.<sup>1</sup> Identity shifts result in a reorienting of a person’s values which ultimately reshapes their ethics.<sup>2</sup> The ethical out workings, then, serve to affirm that an individual’s primary identification with anything outside of Christ has shifted to Christ. The person rightly orders their values and the choices that they now make are a general reflection of who, and what, they value most. To orient their readers toward a deeper appreciation for and stronger devotion to Christ, the biblical writers employed a plethora of methods, one being the art of rhetoric. In this paper, I will argue that John employed rhetoric as a means to shift and shape the identity of his readers to that of the image of Christ.

## Rhetoric in Revelation

A powerful element in the book of Revelation is found in John's shocking discourse. Through his language, John desired to prompt a response by engaging his reader's "emotions, convictions, and identifications" using symbolic language.<sup>3</sup> Further, this shocking symbolic language would have served as a means that caused his readers to reflect on their identity.<sup>4</sup> While John's use of symbolism permeates Revelation, one of the many places where his intention was to surprise his readers and even agitate them, is on full display in Rev 17-18. Rev 17:6<sup>5</sup> describes the woman<sup>6</sup> who "was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus." In these chapters, John sought to lay out the atrocities of Rome and, in doing so "arouse indignation" in his readers against Rome.<sup>7</sup> This purposeful use of rhetoric is John's attempt to deter his readers from identifying with and engaging in Rome's egregious ethics.

In addition to John's use of symbolism as a means to persuade readers, Revelation is also shown to be a "prophetic exhortation for [Christ's] followers to triumph in him" as well as an "apocalyptic portrait of the Lamb's triumph."<sup>8</sup> Stephen L. Homcy noted that at the conclusion of each of the messages to the seven churches was the phrase, "to him who overcomes" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, and 21), which represents both of the aforementioned purposes. While Homcy is certainly correct to observe John's use of rhetoric in the proposed dual nature of the book of Revelation as both prophetic exhortation and apocalyptic portrait, there is arguably a third aspect that should be added to the overall purpose of Revelation's rhetorical intent: the formation of identity. Identity formation is separate and distinct from prophetic exhortation and apocalyptic portrait in that identity formation seeks to answer the

question of who an individual is in light of "who God says they are."<sup>9</sup>

## Identifying as Slaves

In Rev 1:1, John identified himself, and his recipients, as slaves (*doulos*). The contemporary understanding of a slave tends to lean only towards negative aspects which denote a lower societal position, despite the term being polysemous. John, when he identified himself and his recipients as slaves, was not necessarily alluding only to that lower position in society. In fact, deSilva pointed out that this was a title often given to leaders<sup>10</sup> in early Christian writings.<sup>11</sup> Peter Perry made the claim that John's usage of *doulos* implied both "high and low" identification status markers.<sup>12</sup> Thus, while John's usage of *doulos* may have synchronous meanings of which some include inferior implications, there is a sense in which John delights in referring to himself and his readers as slaves of Christ Jesus.

Numerous New Testament texts refer to the relationship between a slave and their master.<sup>13</sup> Being a slave is indicative of possession and carries with it the idea of ownership. Paul wrote in Tit 2:9, "Urge slaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be pleasing, not argumentative." This submission that Paul is urging is a consequence of the fact that they are purchased property, that they are identified as belonging to their masters, which leads to one of the fundamental arguments that John is making in Revelation. Rev 5 recorded the "four living creatures and the twenty-four elders" singing a song to the Lamb who was standing as if he had been slaughtered. The lyrics of the song are recorded in verse 9: "Worthy are You to take the scroll and to break its seals; for You were slaughtered, and You purchased people for God with Your

blood from every tribe, language, people, and nation.”

The message is clear: The Lamb was slaughtered so that God’s people could be purchased. Because of the sacrifice of the Lamb, the people of God can identify in the high status of belonging to God.<sup>14</sup> When John identifies himself, as well as his readers as slaves, he is openly declaring his relationship with God and rhetorically propounding that his readers do so as well. It is through John’s identification as a slave of Christ Jesus that he will inevitably be able to overcome in and through Christ.

### **John’s Usage of νικάω in Revelation**

John used a form of νικάω (conquer; overcome) seventeen times throughout Revelation.<sup>15</sup> Contextually, John’s usage of νικάω to the seven churches was not intended to convey the traditional understanding of “conquering” by prevailing over the enemy with conventional methods. In fact, the way in which John urged his readers to overcome is rooted in the same way that Christ overcame. In Rev 2, the Ephesian church was called to overcome by repenting of having forgotten their first love and returning to the works that they “did at first” (v. 5). Similarly, the church at Pergamum had members who held to the “teaching of Balaam,” partook of food sacrificed to idols, and adhered to the instruction of “the Nicolaitans” (vs. 14-15). To five out of the seven churches, John issued a call for repentance. Clearly, biblical overcoming is separate and distinct from worldly overcoming.

Christians are not called to overcome in the same way military warriors do but are called to be humble servants who live a life epitomized by repentance.<sup>16</sup> Though, John’s exhortation to overcome carries both athletic and military implications.<sup>17</sup> In consideration

of these two implications, David Aune and Grant Osborne both agree that the primary caricature of the overcomer is more militaristic than athletic. The word νικάω carries the implication of war; specifically, Osborne wrote that it “speaks of the eschatological war between the beast and the people of God.”<sup>18</sup> This war is realized in Rev 6:2 when the rider of the white horse goes out to conquer (νικῶν), in 11:7 when the beast overcomes (νικήσει) and kills the two witnesses, and in 13:7 when the beast makes war with and overcomes (νικήσαι) the saints.<sup>19</sup> Together with the implications of athletic and military significance, νικάω further functions as an identity shaping exhortation given by John to the seven churches that is rooted primarily in repentance.

### **Ephesus**

The message to each of the seven churches was immediately followed by rewards that the overcomer would receive. In Rev 2:7, the overcomer will receive the privilege of eating from the tree of life. Certainly, the reader would connect this reference to the tree of life mentioned in Genesis,<sup>20</sup> the same tree of which Adam and Eve were forbade to partake. The tree of life is symbolic of a life that “transcends the natural.”<sup>21</sup> The location of the tree of life is also given in verse 7: in the “Paradise of God.” Rev 22:2 presents additional information concerning the tree of life: “On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Daniel Wong noted that eating from the tree of life is representative of the eternal life of the believer in the New Jerusalem.<sup>22</sup> Thus, the overcomer in 2:7 will have their identity firmly vested in God’s promise of eternal life, recognizing him as the giver of the true source of life.

## Smyrna

To the church in Smyrna, Christ began by saying “The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this” (Rev 2:8). At the beginning of the message, Christ established his power and authority over death. In 2:11, John wrote Ὁ νικῶν (the one who overcomes), with Ὁ functioning as a generic article. Daniel Wallace observed that the generic article functions to distinguish one group of people from another.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, that the one who overcomes will constitute a distinct group of people that will not be affected by the second death. Rev 21:8 gives the clearest image of what the second death is: “But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and sexually immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” The individuals who will experience the second death have no part in the saint’s resurrection nor will they have life in the coming new world.<sup>24</sup> By establishing his authority over death in the opening, it is clear that only Christ can deliver the overcomer from the second death. In other words, the identity of the overcomer can only be secured by the Lamb, the only one capable of awarding the “crown of life” for being “faithful until death” (2:10).

## Pergamum

In 2:17, the one who overcomes is assured “a white stone, and a new name written on the stone.” Ben Witherington suggested that the white stone could refer to “the white pebble used in antiquity for admission to some feasts or to the one used to vote acquittal in a trial.”<sup>25</sup> Craig Keener offered more insight into the white stone, explaining that in antiquity the white stone was raised by jurors to deliver a verdict that led to absolution, while raising a black stone

delivered a guilty verdict.<sup>26</sup> John’s rhetoric suggests that those whose identification is characterized by being an overcomer will experience the grace of the Lamb through an acquittal with the white stone. Moreover, Osborne notes that the new name calls back to Is 62:2, “And you will be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will designate.”

That new name is indicative of an identity shift bestowed by God himself. In the Old and New Testaments, God often changed the names of his people in order to form new identities for them. In Gen 17:5 God changed Abram’s name, which meant “exalted father,” to Abraham which signified he would be the “father of a multitude of nations.”<sup>27</sup> In Jn 1:42 Jesus changed Simon’s name: “You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas (which is translated Peter).” The idea is that the overcomer in Revelation will be given a new identity through a new name that only God himself can impart.

## Thyatira

In Rev 2:28, the overcomer is promised that he will be given “the morning star.” The pledge of the morning star is an enormous expectation that the overcomer can look forward to. Metzger noted that this is not an absurd promise where God intends to give a seemingly immeasurable amount of astral material to the one who overcomes.<sup>28</sup> Rather, this guarantee is linked to 22:16, “I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you of these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.” In other words, “In pledging to give this star to the overcomer, Christ is pledging to give himself.”<sup>29</sup> The overcomer, then, receives the greatest gift of all: the promise of Christ, the “morning star.”

## **Sardis**

The overcomer in Rev 3:5 is given a threefold promise: he will be clothed in white garments, his name will not be removed from the book of life, and Christ will acknowledge him before God the Father and his angels. Beale asserts that the white garments in Revelation symbolize the formational process of oppression mentioned in Dan 11-12.<sup>30</sup> In Dan 12:10, the passage records “Many will be purged, cleansed, and refined...”. The Hebrew word for cleansed is *וַיִּצְהַק* which can be translated as “make white.”<sup>31</sup> In other words, the overcomer is “made white” by affliction; ergo, persecution is an identity shaping factor. Wallace noted that *περιβαλεῖται* (“will cause himself to be clothed”) is a “causative direct middle,” which signifies that the action of the verb is contingent upon the source, in this case the one who overcomes.<sup>32</sup> Thus, the one who overcomes through persecution will themselves shape their identity into one who is morally pure. In other words, the one who repeatedly chooses Christ over Babylon will necessarily influence their own formational process of identity (akin to sanctification).

Gerald Stevens notes that the phrase “I will not erase his name from the book of life,” could also be calling back to the book of Daniel just as the previous phrase did.<sup>33</sup> Because cities in antiquity maintained detailed records of their citizenry and would erase their names “upon death or the commission of a treasonous act,” this phrase would have communicated to John’s readers that the one who overcomes is forever identified in the book of life.<sup>34</sup> The last promise, “I will confess his name before My Father and His angels,” is inferred from Matt 10:32 when Jesus said, “Everyone who confesses Me before people, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven.” The indication being that the overcomer proudly proclaims the name of Christ. In antiquity, a person’s

name was inextricably linked to and epitomized who the individual was.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, John described individuals as having the “name of God” (3:12; 14:1; and 22:4); on the contrary, some individuals are described as having the “name of the beast” (13:17 and 14:11).<sup>36</sup> Yet, it is made clear that those who overcome find and possess a new identity in Jesus Christ because they bear the name of God.

## **Philadelphia**

The same grammatical construction in 2:17, *Ὁ νικῶν*, also occurs in 3:12; however, Wallace noted that the syntax points to John using it as a pendent nominative.<sup>37</sup> The significance of this grammatical usage is founded on the emphasis it places on the overcomer; in this example, the overcomer being made a *στῦλον* (pillar). The question, then, is what significance is there in being made a pillar? Daniel Wong argues two possible positions: first, the pillar signifies the importance of an individual because in antiquity pillars described people of importance<sup>38</sup> and second, the pillar is a symbolic representation of the believer’s guarantee of an “eternal home.”<sup>39</sup> Wong maintains that the latter is the better position.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Christ will write on the pillar “the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name” (v. 12). In other words, the pillar is inscribed with the name of God, clearly indicating whom the overcomer belongs to and with whom their eternal home is secure.

## **Laodicea**

To the church at Laodicea, the overcomer is promised that he will be granted the opportunity “to sit with Me [Jesus] on My throne” (3:21). This promise is echoed often

throughout the New Testament (Matt 19:28, Lk 22:28-30, 2 Tim 2:12, and Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:4, 20:6, 22:5). Matthijs Dulk recognized that the promise to Laodicea was a book end, of sorts, where the life of the Christian culminates with being seated on the throne with Christ.<sup>41</sup> The importance of sitting on the throne with Christ is that it represents “the highest honor conceivable for a Christian.”<sup>42</sup> The message to the Christian who has overcome and lived a life set apart for Christ, a life characterized by solidarity, united in identity with the Messiah is clear: they will reign with Christ (Rev 20:4).

### Conclusion

The above is an attempt at a rational argument for John’s use of rhetoric as a means to conform his readers to the identity of Christ. Having initially established that a follower of Christ emulates a slave, John went on to write how Christ addressed the seven churches. To each church, Christ focused on relevant issues pertaining to their context and then described the rewards each overcomer would receive. As Christ addressed each individual church, the use of language primarily rooted in symbolism encouraged a shift in the identity of his readers.

Three conclusions can be drawn from the study of identity in the book of Revelation. First, the overcomer’s victory is ensured by having their identity in Christ. By calling back to the book of Genesis (tree of life) and even forward to what was yet to come (Christ professing the believer before the Father), the overcomer can be confident in their victory because it is rooted in the victory of Christ. Second, the language suggests that the overcomer will contribute to their own formational development by repeatedly choosing Christ over Babylon. As a result, the overcomer will aid in their own identity shift towards Christ. The choice of Christ over

Babylon becomes more intrinsic the stronger their identity in Christ. And third, the overcomer will reign with Christ by having their identity in him. In fact, the believer will be granted the opportunity to sit with Christ on his throne, the highest honor and privilege. Thus, John’s rhetoric strongly urges that the overcomer find their identity firmly vested in Christ.

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> For a well-rounded discussion on Christian identity in both the Old and New Testaments, see Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winnige, *Identity Formation in the New Testament* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul’s Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Kathy Ehrensperger and J. Brian Tucker, *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Margaret Y. MacDonald, “The Politics of Identity in Ephesians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004): 419-444; Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2018); Terrence L. Donaldson, *Gentile Christian Identity from Cornelius to Constantine: The Nations, the Parting of the Ways, and Roman Imperial Ideology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2020); Susan J. Wendel and David M. Miller, *Torah Ethics and Early Christian Identity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2016); Maia Kotrosits, *Rethinking Early Christian Identity: Affect, Violence, and Belonging* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015); Will N. Timmins, *Romans 7 and Christian Identity: A Study of the ‘I’ in its Literary*

*Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); and Markus Cromhout, *Jesus and Identity: Reconstructing Judean Ethnicity in Q* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2013). Hays primarily wrote his book for those whose “identity is constituted by its confession that the New Testament is normative” (31). He goes on to write that “In such a community, the truly interesting and urgent questions bear upon the way in which the New Testament may be claimed to authorize and shape the church’s life” (31).

<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 187.

<sup>4</sup> Robert L. Brawley, “From Reflex to Reflection? Identity in Philippians 2.6-11 and its Context,” *Reading Paul in Context: Explorations in Identity Formation* (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 146. Brawley discussed this in the context of Philippians, where Paul used shocking “videos” to cause his readers to reflect on their identity. Akin to Paul, John used symbolic language to provoke his readers to contemplate their identity in Christ.

<sup>5</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from the New American Standard Bible.

<sup>6</sup> Rev 17:5 records that on the forehead of the woman is written, “Babylon the great, the mother of prostitutes and of the abominations of the earth.” In 17:18 the reader is given a further indication of who the woman is: “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” Babylon is often believed to be an obscure reference to Rome. See Craig R. Koester, *Revelation*, Anchor Yale Bible 38A (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) who wrote, “the whore is Rome, yet more than Rome” (684). Also reference Lester L. Grabbe and Robert D. Haak, eds., *Knowing the End from the Beginning: The Prophetic, Apocalyptic, and their Relationship* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003) who

suggest that in the Pseudepigraphal works of 2 Baruch, 4 Ezra, and the Sibylline Oracles the use of Babylon is a veiled allusion to Rome (69).

<sup>7</sup> David deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 205.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen L. Homcy, “‘To Him Who Overcomes’: A Fresh Look at What ‘Victory’ Means for the Believer According to the Book of Revelation,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 193.

<sup>9</sup> Snodgrass, *Who God Says You Are: A Christian Understanding of Identity*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> deSilva lists numerous biblical texts in order to demonstrate his point: Rom 1:1, Gal 1:10, Phil 1:1, Titus 1:1, Jas 1:1, 2 Pet 1:1, and Jude 1:1.

<sup>11</sup> deSilva, *Seeing Things God’s Way*, 131.

<sup>12</sup> Peter S. Perry, “The People of God in the Book of Revelation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, ed. Craig R. Koester (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 331.

<sup>13</sup> Reference Col 3:22-24, 1 Tim 6:1-2, and Tit 2:9-10.

<sup>14</sup> deSilva, *Seeing Things God’s Way*, 331.

<sup>15</sup> See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21 (x2), 5:5, 6:2 (x2), 11:7, 12:11, 13:7, 15:2, 17:14, and 21:7.

<sup>16</sup> See C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership: Timeless Wisdom on Servant Leadership* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House, 1998). Wilkes observed that Jesus lived as the “Suffering Servant Messiah,” a concept antithetical to military conquest (9). In Mk 9:35 Jesus said, “If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” Mk 10:45 records, “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Of special note is how Jesus entered Jerusalem on

Palm Sunday. Mt 21:5 records, “Behold your King is coming to you, *humble*, and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

17 David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, Word Biblical Commentary 52a (Dallas: Word Books Publisher, 1997), 151 and Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 122.

18 Aune, 122.

19 There is a considerable amount of debate surrounding who the rider of the white horse represents. Numerous scholars suggest that the white horse is either Christ or a likeness of him. See Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. 4 (London: Rivingtons, 1875), 255; William Hendricksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 1967), 93; Zane C. Hodges, “The First Horseman of the Apocalypse,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 119 (1962): 333; and Michael Bachmann, “Der erste apokalyptische Reiter und die Anlage des letzten Buches der Bibel,” *Biblica* 67 (1986): 275. Other scholars advocate that the white horse represents a satanic figure. See Mathias Rissi, “Rider on the White Horse: A Study of Revelation 6:1-8,” *Interpretation* 18 (1964): 414; Alan F. Johnson, “Revelation,” *The Expositors Bible Commentary: Hebrews-Revelation*, eds. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 397-603; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 375; and David J. Macleod, “The First ‘Last Thing’: The Second Coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-16),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 156 (1999): 210. Yet still, other scholars argue that the horseman is indicative of the insatiable appetite humans have for war. See H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911), 84; Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 101; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1981), 131; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998); 141-2;

David E. Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, Word Biblical Commentary 52b (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 393-4; Kendall H. Easley, *Revelation*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998), 106; and Bruce M. Metzger, *Breaking the Code—Participant’s Book: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 58. It is the author’s view that the rider of the horse does not represent Christ, but either symbolizes a satanic figure or human conquest.

20 Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1989), 50.

21 Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 86.

22 Daniel K. K. Wong, “The Tree of Life in Revelation 2:7,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 155 (1998): 226.

23 Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 227-30.

24 G. K. Beale, and D. A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 1093.

25 Ben Witherington III, *Revelation*, The New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 103-4.

26 Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 126.

27 God also changed the name of Sarah (Gen 17:15) and Jacob (Gen 32:28).

28 Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 37.

29 *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Beale, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 1096.

<sup>31</sup> F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2017), 526.

<sup>32</sup> Wallace, 424.

<sup>33</sup> Gerald L. Stevens, *Revelation: The Past and Future of John's Apocalypse* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 341.

<sup>34</sup> Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 40.

<sup>35</sup> Osborne, 181.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>37</sup> Wallace., 52. Wallace observed, "This is a nom. absolute participle followed by a pronoun in the acc. case as required by the syntax of the sentence. This could be read, 'With reference to the one who overcomes, I will make him...'"

<sup>38</sup> Note the use in Galatians 2:9: "and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be *pillars*, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised." See Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (Harvard University Press: LCL 401). Philo wrote, "For good men are the *pillars* of whole communities, and they support cities and city-governments as if they were great houses" (1.21). Also reference Joseph and Aseneth (*OTP* 17:6), "And Aseneth called the seven virgins and stood them before the man. And the man blessed them and said, 'May the Lord God the Most High bless you. And you shall be seven *pillars* of the City of Refuge, and all the fellow inhabitants of the chosen of that city will rest upon you forever (and) ever'" (231).

<sup>39</sup> Daniel K. K. Wong, "The Pillar and the Throne in Revelation 3:12, 21," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (1999), 300.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 300. Wong offered several reasons as to why the pillar being a symbolic

representation of the believer's eternal home is a superior view. Wong wrote, "First, security is the point in the very next statement: The overcomer will never again go out (Rev. 3:12). Second, several earthquakes had struck Philadelphia, causing its residents to flee to the countryside to find temporary abodes... This assurance of security for all eternity would thus have special significance to the believers in that city. Third, another contrast may be intended: People go in and out of temples in the present life, but the overcomers will never go out of the eternal temple" (300-1).

<sup>41</sup> Matthijs Den Dulk, "The Promises to the Conquerors in the Book of Revelation," *Biblica* 87 (2006): 516.

<sup>42</sup> Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 46.

## **New Use of Force Options: Implications when the Force is Forced to Change**

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Policy changes involving "use-of-force options" that occur within a short period without consideration of the cascading impacts increase the danger to law enforcement personnel, police organizations, and society in profound ways. This is especially apt when organizational leaders yield to public outrage without considering consequences or subsequent effects before altering or repealing policies protecting police officers. Policy should evolve to improve law enforcement's ability to perform their jobs

more effectively, not facilitate increased crime or criminal opportunities. Governor Larry Hogan of Maryland attempted to veto sweeping policy changes in 2021, quickly pushed through by the legislature. He stated, "...the legislation would "undermine the goal that I believe we share of building transparent, accountable, and effective law enforcement institutions" and "erode police morale, community relationships, and public confidence" (Casiano, Fox News, 2021 Apr 9). Governor Hogan recognized the difficulty in effectively balancing both aspects of the policy. The Maryland policy changed the definition of use-of-force and restricted law enforcement officers' options to use specific types of force to subdue an assailant, i.e., choke holds, even when a substantial risk of injury or death exists (Steinburg, 2021, Capital News Service). Examining the underlying social drivers and political climate affecting policing is necessary to understand why such policy changes occurred. Media outlets argue that public opposition regarding law enforcement fomented the "Ferguson effect" phenomenon in August 2014. However, assessing the observable behaviors against relevant social criminological theory may provide additional insights into the underlying causes of such a societal state of violent protests. Therefore, this paper assumes a societal shift occurring ideologically, politically, and socially in the last few years, instigating conditions leading to increased criminal behaviors. The paper will not assess whether the "Ferguson effect" is an actual concept or other labeled phenomena, as the empirical results are inconclusive. Instead, the research will assess the impacts of the most prevalent police policy change impacting state and local jurisdictions. The exploration will discuss statutory requirements defining the use of force while acknowledging its multiple variations at the state and local levels. The research will briefly delve into factors affected by policy decisions driven by the political

climate and public perception leading to or involving the targeting of police, recruitment, retention, and future policy implications concerning policing in the United States. It will also assess the underlying social factors contributing to de-policing as an emerging issue.



### **State Statutes and Policy**

Most states (41) have some form of statutory definition and limits to the Use of Force while also codifying a definition of lethal force. Most, if not all, police organizations further establish policy limits to reduce liability further while adhering to the statutes and policy. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, all states in the U.S. define police officers' authorities to exact an arrest under the law. Such statutes are generally stated as follows:

[Use of Force]...justifies an officer's use of deadly physical force if the officer reasonably believes that the force was necessary to "(1) effect an arrest or to prevent the escape from custody of an arrested person whom the law enforcement officer reasonably believes has committed or attempted to commit a felony and is presently armed or

dangerous; or (2) defend himself or herself or a third person from what the law enforcement officer reasonably believes to be the use or imminent use of deadly physical force (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2021, Jan 12, Para 2).

The research literature lacked a standard single statute or definition that applies across all jurisdictions and found that most were policy variations driven by state or local police organizations.

### **Political Climate**

Public antipathy toward law enforcement has sporadically but gradually risen in recent years following the highly publicized death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014. Thus, recent reforms to police protection policies, such as outlining stricter limitations of the use of force, mandated minimum probable cause to stop, frisk, or investigate, and defunding implemented by state and local governments are the most significant contributing policy factors affecting the future of policing and are likely to increase crime rates nationally and contribute to a degradation of domestic national security over the next several years. There are over 800,000 law enforcement officers in active service nationally as of 2021, according to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund. However, culturally perceived phenomena, the impact of public outcry to remove long-established policy protections, such as qualified immunity and the use of force, has altered the landscape to such an extent resulting in de-policing as an emerging issue. De-policing in the context of this piece is defined as the intentionally minimal response necessary to exact one's duty as a law enforcement officer. The degrees vary according to the public perception and perceived amount of risk involved in responding to crime (National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund, 2022).

### **Theoretical Implications**

Merton's anomie theory generally applies broadly and establishes a framework for assessing the potential causes and impacts of policing policy changes. Merton argues that higher criminal behaviors among divergent groups, usually among the lower classes, are primarily due to cultural disparity (Bernard et al., 2019, pp.154-155). Merton asserts that higher criminal behaviors among divergent groups within the lower classes are due primarily to cultural wealth disparity. Thus, the lower classes aspire to more wealth based on the established American cultural expectations that some amount of undefined wealth equals status and opportunity. When wealth and opportunity are perceived as denied by those either unwilling or unable to attain it, disparate groups arise designated the "haves" and "have nots." This gives rise to societal strain that arguably spreads across self-perceived lower classes over time, reaching a tipping point of frustration and anger among the "have nots," creating a state of anomie or normlessness applicable to a specific individual or societal group. The state of anomie acts as the impetus for those frustrated groups to act out and commit destructive or violent crimes rationalized as protests. Merton classified this tipping point as rejecting retreatism and adopting "rebellious behavior" (Bernard et al., 2019, pp. 153-156). An example includes the Ferguson riots triggered in 2014 following the death of Michael Brown, with no charges levied against Darren Wilson. As the pre-existing cultural strain was expressed in the form of violent riots, property damage, targeting of law enforcement, etc., perceptions and circumstances indicate the same cycle occurred six years later in 2020 with the Seattle Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP) incident as explained by Piza & Connealy (2022). Several similar violent incidents occurred across the country under similar cyclical circumstances in states such as

Georgia, Massachusetts, California, Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, New York, Texas, Oregon, Washington state, and Washington, D.C. to various degrees (BBC news, 2015 Aug 10; Wikipedia, 2020). Notably, all incidents occurred in urban areas with concentrated populations. As a response to the increased danger and loss of public support, police force frustrations and despondency proportionately grew and created strain as police officers were unable to achieve their function and purpose, resulting in reduced morale and de-policing as such increased crime. It is presumptuous to think a single incident caused the strain, but a culmination of several acted as the catalyst.

Also, aspects of Agnew's general strain theory may have underlying implications and suggest policy changes were implemented as a coping mechanism, on the part of state and local governments, to widespread negative emotions or strain resulting from the catalytic effects of the police-involved shootings and the perception of injustice regarding forceful police tactics. Thus, contributing to [a rise in] criminal behaviors [*emphasis added*] (Bernard et al., 2019, pp. 163-164). An example of Agnew's strain theory affecting individuals is the observed and notable increase in "snatch and grab" crimes since 2020 throughout the urban United States in locations such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, California, Illinois, and Washington State (Miller, 2021 Nov 24). "Snatch and Grab" crime sprees could also result from increased de-policing effects in locations where police officers are hindered by law, policy, threat, or a reduction in forces capable of responding promptly. In any case, the effects of de-policing have immediate and long-term implications. Criminal actions have been rationalized as a justified coping mechanism for violent or destructive responses by some media outlets (New York Post Editorial Board, 2021).

Lastly, George Vold's group conflict theory established a solid foundation underlying the rebellious behavior concept

and social strain encompassed by Merton and Agnew's theories viewed from a theoretical integration perspective. Bernard et al. (2019) suggest that responses to social pressures perceived by segments of society have resulted in conflict among disparate ethnic groups in a complex society (272-274). However, it is assumed that social pressures are intrinsic to any community. Therefore, social pressures- in and of themselves do not cause violent responses and criminal behavior but are considered a contributing factor. The theory postulates that social forces attain a state of equilibrium that only requires a trigger. A triggering incident precipitates criminal actions combined with an overt or covert willingness to act. Each theory could generally explain, in some way, the rise in certain types of crime since 2014, as well as the increase in de-policing in the last few years based on a coalescence of political, public media, and societal pressures fomenting an anti-police sentiment thus, contributing to, if not driving the phenomena of de-policing. However, further empirical research is warranted to verify the observed behaviors. Responding to social pressures perceived by segments of society, including police forces as a collective social group, has conflicted with the society the police organizations are sworn to protect. The dynamic equilibrium is disrupted due to high-profile police shootings and a generalized presumption throughout society that isolated incidents represent an entire organization. In these instances, conflict arises from perceived inequality within the application of laws and justice by police and the system against different cultures and ethnicities combined with perceived inaction by governmental representatives. The inaction thus drives the process that the group must resort to violent or destructive criminal protests to warrant political and legal corrective actions. For example, forty-one states enacted statutory changes in response to demonstrations calling

for defunding, restrictions added to use-of-force options, or no bail policies; 16 States enacted laws restricting the use of force by police officers since 2020: California, New York, Illinois, Colorado, Minnesota, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, New Jersey, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont (Crampton, 2021). Some states enacted laws to better protect police officers due to increasing crime rates and violent crime occurring in highly populated urban cities. The jurisdictions strengthening police protections include Arkansas, Arizona, California, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Utah (Subramanian & Arzy, 2021).

### **Cascading Effects**

A professional police force is an interdependent, necessary, and critical component for state order, the rule of law, and good governance. A review of the literature for factors associated with effects on overall police policy reforms indicates police morale, despondency, recruitment, retention, and response activity have all degraded, especially in largely populated areas where police presence per capita of the population has increased (Deuchar et al., 2019). The prolonged existence of these factors will invariably lead to a degradation of order and higher crime rates nationally. It will eventually become a critical political, and ideological issue as societal intolerance of crime grows. In addition, the policy shifts combined with negative media coverage will no doubt cause increasingly negative public perceptions of the police contributing to decreased morale and greater despondency among the remaining active police forces. The interactive pressures and dangers associated with performing the law enforcement role also increase. God informs us to accept the position and honor of one's duty that serves society in Romans, stating,

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men (*New King James Version Bible*, 2006/1982, Rom. 12:14-18). Despite this guidance, police morale has decreased in the past few years, creating issues with recruitment, retention, and public perception.

### **Police Morale**

Public confidence regarding police is at a 47-year low hovering around 48% based on the latest study by Hoffman et al. (2021). The growing negative media coverage has shifted public perception generating conflict while concurrently affecting police cooperation with the public and vice-versa (Deuchar et al., 2019, p. 1048). Vold's conflict theory summarized these effects suggesting the responses to social pressures perceived by a segment of society have resulted in conflict among disparate [*racial*] groups in a complex society [*emphasis added*] (Bernard et al., 2019, pp. 272-274). The pressures have given rise to the various advocates for police reform, such as the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and legislative actions at the state and local levels empathetic to such ideological positions and activities (Rosenthal, 2016, p. 678). These actions have further eroded confidence and cooperation among the residents the police seek to serve and protect. Predictively, there will be continued erosion of cooperation between growing segments of society with police as more and more incidents arise, and police are vilified in the media before due process is permitted to run its course.

Public cooperation and support have degraded and contributed to rising despondency and reduced response among various police forces. According to Chanin and Sheats (2018), as a result of policy shifts eroding protections, police have used their discretionary powers, delineated as "dissent shirking," to minimize their responsibilities (p. 105). The result includes increased response times, minimal interaction to quell or prevent crime (no proactivity), and further erosion of public confidence among victims' families and friends. The situation is exacerbated further by police officers' fear of punitive actions taken against them with no support from the leadership or policy protections to serve as a check and balance to emotional public outcry. The low morale data reported by Marier and Fridell (2020), combined with the correlations between low police morale and de-policing, corroborate the assertion. They point to empirically supported media reports among police organizations highlighting the potential consequences of not supporting police in local communities. For example, they indicate conservative-leaning news outlets reported comments from current and former law enforcement officers who showed a trend of plummeting morale since 2015. The response of the "Blue Lives Matter" cadence emerged as a counter to the BLM movement, arguing that "criticism of the police was just as dehumanizing for the police as racism was for African Americans. The conflict was leading to the demoralization of police" (pp. 696). This viewpoint has emerged again since 2020 as property and violent crime rise nationally. Corollary impacts include more emboldened offenders combined with more widespread victimization as criminals realize police intervention is unlikely. For example, news reports reported "grab and go" thefts across multiple jurisdictions, indicating a significant decrease in officer presence (Karimi, 2021). Despite the rising conflicts between the police and society, the Lord teaches us as citizens

and as stewards of faith to remain steadfast, stating, "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" (*New King James Version Bible*, 2006/1982, 2 Timothy 1:13-14).

### **Public Perception**

Public support and confidence in police forces are critical to the success of policing organizations. However, public perceptions vary among jurisdictions and range from supportive to apathetic or derisive. These attitudes vary based on news media narratives, a layperson's view of the law, and differences between police and public cultures. Meares et al. (2015) studied the cultural differences between civilians and the police, noting that police officers tend to align their thinking relative to the law and legal perspectives when approaching all confrontational situations, using terms like "constitutional, legal, or appropriate" (p. 299). This cultural notion is also true when police officers consider debatable issues such as racial profiling, community-oriented policing, or aggressive policing behaviors.

Conversely, citizens view these same issues under the lenses of right or wrong. Most citizens are unaware of the subtle legalities that make police officers and policing organizations effective in their respective roles (p. 300). Legality socialization allows a well-trained law enforcement official to objectively assess a situation through the lens of the law. Those instances where a police officer has egregiously ignored the appropriate role, especially procedural issues defined by policy, result in public criticism and hostility. As public antipathy rises, the targeting of law enforcement will affect recruitment in response. As capable guardians become fewer

and fewer, criminal behaviors and crime rates will increase also.

Some police organizations are addressing public perception through “Community Police Academies.” These two-week introductory courses are designed to help citizens in the local community understand the challenges law enforcement officers face daily using situational role-playing (Perez et al., 2021). Perhaps the police outreach will be able to change public perceptions as police officers conduct themselves more effectively. God provides a warning to not blindly follow a crowd based on spurious information but embrace the truth saying, “do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (*New King James Version Bible*, 2006/1982, Rom. 12:2).

#### Targeting of Police

Over the past few years, the highly publicized police-related shootings across the United States have caused a violent response from a cross-section of society. Beginning in 2014, the Federal Bureau of Investigation began monitoring the targeting of law enforcement officers nationally with statistics updated annually titled Law Enforcement Officers Feloniously Killed and Assaulted (FBI, LEOKA, 2010-2019). According to FBI statistics published in 2014, 51 officers were feloniously killed in the line of duty, and in 2016, 66 officers were killed. Between January to December 2021, there have been “59 officers murdered” in the line of duty (FBI Dallas, 2021). The year 2014 is apparent as this is the high-profile shooting death of Michael Brown. Notably, 2016 coincides with media announcements of either actual shooting incidents or the outcomes of the trials or investigations associated with police shooting incidents suggesting a link between media and public response to police-involved shootings. The correlation between these

variables will not be explored herein as it is beyond its scope. The years 2015 and 2017 show a reduction and would be expected during the trials or investigations into the incidents, suggesting the shootings or investigation outcomes were not emphasized in the media. However, the data does indicate a troubling trend of targeting police. This factor, combined with policies hindering the police, will result in diminished recruitment and retention in the future.

Perhaps we as a society can remember that only God can exact truly just punishment. He advises us, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (*New King James Version Bible*, 2006/1982, Rom. 12:19).

#### Recruitment

Recruitment for the policing profession has declined significantly over the past three years. Marrow et al. (2019), citing Jackman (2018), underscore the nationwide decline in applications indicated by police departments and training academies. Each showed a steep decline in recruitment since 2018 (p. 586). The authors further attribute the drop to the “Ferguson Effect,” however, Marrow et al. (2019) refer to the effect as more of a process following all questionable shooting incidents involving the police. Agnew's general strain theory best describes and accounts for the process. Agnew suggests the resulting emotions are a coping mechanism for widespread negative emotions (163-164), thus contributing to criminal behaviors. The criminal behaviors arise from expectations that police organizations will take immediate corrective action. Nevertheless, when the organizations afford the involved police officer or officers due process and a delay in response is perceived, public backlash is violent, resulting in increased property crimes, public non-cooperation, and violence against police in

general. The "demonization of police," as described by Deuchar et al. (2019), perceived by law enforcement personnel increases the likelihood of future violent confrontations among the populace as the public response is to not cooperate with police instructions (p. 1048). These situations further erode law enforcement legitimacy and bring additional scrutiny to police actions feeding the drive to make more policy changes neutering police activity and contributing to further criminal activity. This situation alludes to an aspect of Cohen and Felson's Routine Activities Theory regarding the presence of "capable guardians" or the lack thereof (Bernard et al., 2019, pp. 51-52). Notably, Deuchar's work mentions another phenomenon from the police policy shifts demonizing police, such as the "...sanctification of criminals" (Deuchar et al., 2019, p. 1048). Recruitment is essential to ensure the future of practical, capable guardians for society; however, retaining trained, experienced, qualified officers is just as critical. Police organizations have lost good officers based on policy changes caused by isolated incidents, which have driven unexpected decisions to leave the profession or retire due to hindering and restrictive policy changes.

### **Retention**

Maryland was one of the first states to pass legislation codifying the Police Officers Bill of Rights in 2016. In 2021, the statute was repealed in response to the shooting death of George Floyd and mounting pressure from the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement and public outcry (Wiggins and Cox, 2021). Examples of some of the effects following policy changes include a 15.6% increase in homicides in 2015 immediately following the Michael Brown death in Ferguson, Missouri. Within a year, Ferguson reported a 46% decrease in police activities (Piza & Connealy, 2022, p. 38). Subsequently, Chicago reported a 58% increase in homicides in 2016, and in

2020, Chicago, Milwaukee, New York, and Philadelphia all demonstrated significant increases in homicide rates and crime rates overall (p. 38). Conversely, police patrol activity decreased during the same periods in response to implementing more restrictive policies. The authors determined that the cause of the increases in homicides across the various jurisdictions was de-policing (p. 38-39).

Recruitment and retention of capable police officers demand more policy protections. Police unions will rise to provide those services, or state and local jurisdictions will find their ability to effectively govern reduced significantly as crime rates affect the socio-economic status, drive residents to new venues, and shift political sympathies to representatives more aligned with law- and-order policies in the future.

### **Rise of Police Unions**

Police unions will demand greater police protections in the future as de-policing, or "dissent shirking," and retirements rise in response to restrictive policies, becomes a political issue and as crime rates increase. Police unions across the nation responded to restrictive policy changes in 2020 by updating and modifying employment contracts with local and state jurisdictions designed to "...frustrate and discourage attempts to discipline individual police officers" (Fegley, 2020, p. 166). Thirty-six states have contracts with the Fraternal Order of Police unions mandating that "police departments are required to bargain with unions before imposing any new rule that could affect the terms or conditions of employment, any internal reform meant to address accountability issues, such as requiring the use of body cameras, must be approved of by the unions" (Fegley, 2020, p. 166).

According to Hilal and Litsey (2020), police officer turnover rates were approximately 11 percent nationally in 2015.

Today the average retention rate is about 19.9 percent, and according to the New York Post, average retirement numbers range from 45 to 75 percent from 2020-2021 (Lungariello, 2021). Public perceptions, police morale, de-policing practices, recruitment, and retention are essential interactive elements impacting effective policing. How jurisdictions manage and balance expectations, and the effects of the new policies may see a backlash to more social control policies.

### **Future policy implications**

As police forces become more marginalized over time, predictive results from social control theory will rise in response. As crime rates rise, so will reciprocal statutes and expected enforcement increase to address the rise in criminal behavior, thus spurring greater social control. Notably, another critical factor that could drive a policy reversal includes the residents' socio-economic status and the overall economy. Low crime rates equal economic growth because people who feel safe can spend money and engage in entertainment activities, bolstering businesses and helping the local economy grow. A decrease in public safety will significantly impact regional economies and businesses, and governmental organizations will demand a more robust response to crime if current trends persist.

The intervening years since Ferguson, Missouri, have witnessed several fundamental leadership changes across several local police organizations, shifting leadership demographics and ethnic dimensions. These leadership shifts have contributed to implementing policy changes attempting to control police activities. In 2014, only 21 metropolitan police organizations were led by African American Police Chiefs; in 2021, that number was over fifty. This shift is notable because, in 2020, the International Association of Chiefs of Police supported significant reform policies previously tabled due to

conflicts with police unions. Despite this shift, little has changed in recruitment or retention. Most police officers remain predominantly white, and demoralization continues to rise (Robinson, 2020). The social pressures emerging between the two segments of society, the police and a portion of local community members, will eventually cause havoc across the entire community as de-policing is anticipated to continue to rise.

According to Robinson (2020), "larger police agencies are taking steps to revise their use of force policies, and it is having an impact" (p. 229). However, the description and type of effects are not stated or implied. The rise in crime rates and the targeting of police officers was doubtfully the intent. Robinson (2020) indicated that the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) generated a series of principles to guide police reform in 2020. Their view sees the greatest potential for reducing the use of force in two settings: police interactions with individuals with mental health problems, drug addiction, or other conditions that can prompt erratic behavior and those who are unarmed or armed with a knife or weapon other than a firearm (p. 229).

Despite these newly implemented changes, de-policing remains while public perception of police remains low. Some reforms are intended to enhance police training by incorporating better training of recruits to better engage with those with mental illness, the elderly, and other non-standard interactions. How these reforms will affect policing and police training in the future remains to be seen, but the negative impacts are being observed now.

### **Conclusion**

Police officers are driven by a strong sense of purpose, duty, and dedication to their communities. The Lord inspires the kind of duty required of all of us in society to

understand and live together under the law. Jesus tells us in Romans,

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves (*New King James Version Bible*, 2006/1982, Rom. 13:1-3).

Multiple policy changes occurring simultaneously within a short span with the intent to limit law enforcement actions have profound implications for police organizations and society as a whole as good governance is intertwined with effective and just law and order. Public perception plays a more significant role in policing and policy development than many realize. When policy reforms hinder policing activity and place stricter limitations on use-of-force options, it endangers officers and leads to de-policing throughout communities. Mandating probable cause to stop, frisk, and investigate prevents police from proactively disrupting criminal activity. These factors, combined with the calls for defunding by state and local governments, are implemented without understanding the second and third-order effects caused to the public, such as increased crime rates and growing boldness by offenders committing property and violent crimes, and less interaction by police to provide the public safety necessary to live without fear in a civilized society.

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## Examining Patrick Henry’s Christian Worldview and Beliefs on a Christian Government

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The United States, unlike many other countries, has a distinct separation of church and state. From William Penn to Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, James Madison, and Patrick Henry, discussions on religious freedom continued to shape the young nation. Today, most scholars note that the majority of the Founding Fathers were Deists. Nevertheless, this nation’s government had close links with the tenets of Christianity. Many people do not realize that opinions differed on the essence of religious freedom. Henry argued that religious liberty should be available, yet a government adhering to the morality of the Lord Jesus Christ was necessary for God’s blessings. Further research is necessary on Henry’s view of religious freedom. Furthermore, any student studying the history of Christianity in America

needs to determine why Henry desired a country adhering to Biblical morality.

One can argue that Christianity played a crucial role in developing the United States. However, the Founding Fathers had to determine how much of an impact religion would have on the newly formed government. When the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England were under much scrutiny, the early leaders of America sought to separate themselves from a tyrannical government being controlled by religion. Early America was predominantly Protestant, distancing itself from Catholicism. Adherents on both sides vigorously debated exactly how far the separation of church and state would go. The implications of the religious freedom granted by the early Americans must never be overlooked. In America, people are free to worship as they please, and the government's involvement in religion is strictly limited. Religion and specifically Christianity helped to shape the United States into the nation it is today. Patrick Henry is perhaps most widely known for his political views before and during the American Revolution. However, many ignore his Christian worldview. From opposing the *Stamp Act* to disputing the term "We the People," Henry was no stranger to American government. Yet, this study exclusively examines his Christian worldview.

### Patrick Henry

Born in 1736 in Virginia to John and Sarah Henry, young Patrick grew up in a large family of nine children.<sup>1</sup> Henry, who was named after his "Christian uncle," grew up on a farm in the country.<sup>2</sup> His father and uncle

educated him, instructing him on life and its lessons at home.<sup>3</sup> Historian David Vaughan writes that "The Henry clan, then, was generally well-educated, and John Henry was a man of classical education."<sup>4</sup> Patrick's education focused on the great minds of the past and, most importantly, the God of the Bible. Vaughan adds, "It was in the home of his parents, then, that Patrick Henry learned life's most important lessons: morality, obedience, discipline, and responsibility."<sup>5</sup> These ideals never disappeared, as he always focused on the morality of God and the hopelessness of humans.

While both his parents adhered to Christianity, doctrines separated John and Sarah. Henry was baptized in the Church of England, though predominately raised in the Presbyterian model of Christianity. Sarah was a self-proclaimed Calvinist who played a significant role in teaching young Henry about God and His existence. Calvinism emphasizes that God adopted His sheep into salvation strictly by His grace, while others are stuck in their sin and destined for hell. Though he never was a member of a particular denomination in his later years, the Doctrines of Grace stayed with him his entire life. Henry's upbringing was similar to the early New England Puritans, respecting the sovereignty of God.

Henry learned under the Rev. Samuel Davies, which made an everlasting impact on his relationship with the Lord.<sup>6</sup> Many saw Davies at the time as one of the greatest preachers of the day, often comparing him to George Whitefield.<sup>7</sup> Henry grew up in a Christian worldview from his youth, observing Jesus Christ as a personal Savior who regenerated His believers. Author George

<sup>1</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *Lion of Liberty: Patrick Henry and the Call to a New Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> David J. Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty: The Uncompromising Statesmanship of Patrick Henry* (Nashville: Cumberland House, 1997), 133.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>6</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Morgan wrote, “Patrick Henry spoke in terms of enthusiasm of Mr. Davies. It is supposed that he first kindled the fire and afforded the model of Henry’s elocution.”<sup>8</sup>

Being fluent in Latin, Greek, and French, Henry was a well-rounded, educated young man.<sup>9</sup> Excelling in mathematics and science, he also successfully played the “flute, guitar and harpsichord.”<sup>10</sup> Later in life, he would find himself working as a “farmer, store owner, becoming a husband and a father.”<sup>11</sup> It is said he lived by the following motto:

To be true and just in all my dealings.  
To bear no malice, nor hatred in my heart. To keep my hands from picking and stealing. Not to covet other men’s goods; but to learn and labor truly to get my own living and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.<sup>12</sup>

In short, Henry was quite similar to some early Puritans. He believed in an active creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, as his sovereign Savior and was taught to live his life in obedience to Christ (John 14:15). As Henry grew older, he would become one of the most vocal voices of liberty. In a speech condoning the American Revolution, he declared, “We are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power.”<sup>13</sup> Even today, people live by his motto of “*Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death.*” It was evident that Henry fought for freedom. Some have argued that Henry’s Christian worldview is what shaped his impressive legacy.

<sup>8</sup> George Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1907), 57.

<sup>9</sup> Unger, *Lion of Liberty*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>11</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 141.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> William Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster Publishing, 1818), 123.

*Give Me Liberty  
or  
Give Me Death!*

### Christianity & Religious Freedom

Seeking to establish a bill for religious freedom in 1779, Thomas Jefferson sought a clear separation of church and state.<sup>14</sup> It was clear that Jefferson and others feared that America would resemble England and its distinct relationship with the Church of England. With James Madison’s assistance, Jefferson saw their position become an official Virginia law “seven years later.”<sup>15</sup> Henry held a different opinion, arguing that freedom of religion was pivotal; however, his idea limited freedom of religion to various Christian denominations.<sup>16</sup> Henry sought to make Christianity the main faith of the “Commonwealth of Virginia.”<sup>17</sup> Church Historian Edward Gaustad wrote:

Indeed, that long-standing pattern led some patriots to argue that if the

<sup>14</sup> Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt, *The Religious History of America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002), 48.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Church of England were no longer officially supported, then at the very least Christianity must be declared the state religion. Patrick Henry took the lead in trying to get such a bill passed in the 1780s, a bill that would affirm the Christian Religion shall in all times coming be deemed and held to be the established Religion of the Commonwealth.<sup>18</sup>

Madison became infamously known as the “member of the Virginia legislation” who opposed Henry and ultimately defeated his bill.<sup>19</sup> Madison feared that labeling Christianity as Virginia’s religion could further develop into a “one denomination”-ruled state government.<sup>20</sup> For Madison, this was unacceptable and no better than the tyranny the Founding Fathers sought to avoid with the Church of England.<sup>21</sup> Madison declared:

Legislators simply do not have the right, much less the wisdom, to set themselves up as judges of religious truth. Beyond that, however, if today Virginia can lawfully establish Christianity to the exclusion of all religions, what then will prevent Virginia tomorrow from lawfully establishing a particular denomination of Christians to the exclusion of all others?<sup>22</sup>

Henry feared the religious view of Deism and its negative influence on Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Deism, defined as a “belief in a God who creates but has no continuing involvement with the world and events within it,” is a dangerous belief that often leads to

humanism.<sup>24</sup> Adhering to Deism, Jefferson, Madison, and John Adams all played a prominent role in forming religious freedom in the United States.<sup>25</sup> Many believe that most founders by the late 1700s adhered to some of Deism’s teachings. The late theologian and historian C. Gregg Singer explained Deism in early America: “It is obvious that such doctrines as the inherent goodness of man [and] the perfectibility of human nature through education, and other human means, were a violent contradiction of the Puritan theology at its very center.”<sup>26</sup> Most government leaders believed that humankind had the ability to do good, which was contrary to Henry’s teachings. Henry firmly held to the Biblical view of fallen creation (Romans 3:10–11, Psalm 51:5). He wrote this about Deism:

The view which the rising greatness of our country present[s] to my eyes is greatly tarnished by the general prevalence of Deism which with me is but another name for vice and depravity. I am, however, much consoled by reflecting, that the religion of Christ has from its first appearance in the world, been attacked in vain by all the wits, philosophers, and wise ones, aided by every power of man and its triumph has been complete. What is there in the wit or wisdom of the present Deistical writers or professors that can compare them with Hume, Shaftsbury, Bolingbroke and others? And yet these have been confuted and their fame decaying, insomuch that the puny efforts of Paine are thrown in to prop their tottering fabric, whose

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 124.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 125.

<sup>23</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 181.

<sup>24</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2001), 48.

<sup>25</sup> Gaustad and Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, 137.

<sup>26</sup> C. Gregg Singer, *A Theological Interpretation of American History* (Vestavia Hills, AL: Solid Ground, 1964), 27.

foundations cannot stand the test of time.<sup>27</sup>

Henry continued:

I hear it is said by the deists that I am one of the number; and indeed, that some good people think I am no Christian. This thought gives me much more pain than the appellation of tory; because I think religion of infinitely higher importance than politics; and I find much cause to reproach myself, that I have lived so long, and have given no decided and public proofs of my being a Christian. But indeed, my dear child, this is a character which I prize far above all this world has or can boast.<sup>28</sup>

Historian Paul Johnson argued that “Jefferson and Madison did not abhor religion,” yet they despised religious intolerance.<sup>29</sup> Johnson wrote, “What they both hated was intolerance and any restriction of religious practice by those who would not admit the legitimacy of diverse beliefs.”<sup>30</sup> Henry firmly adhered to a sovereign God who not only ruled the world but also “established and ordained the government itself.”<sup>31</sup> Regarding Henry’s view on religious freedom, Baylor University Professor Thomas Kidd wrote that “Once freed from the restraints of the Bible and morality...skeptical Americans would naturally pursue selfishness and immorality.”<sup>32</sup> Henry argued for a government that enforced morality and God’s standard, like the New England Puritans before him.

Firmly adhering to the depravity of humankind, Henry viewed immorality as a

self-destructing part of mankind unless adequately controlled by Christian standards of life. For this reason, he supported “limited government,” as he saw political leaders as nothing more than sinners themselves.<sup>33</sup> The Bible was the true moral code of life, unchanging and infallible for him.<sup>34</sup> Vaughan writes, “His view of Liberty—that jewel he strove to protect was rooted to his Christian worldview. Government is not the enemy, for God ordains it.”<sup>35</sup> Henry never quoted “poetry, only quoting the Bible.”<sup>36</sup> Biographer George Morgan pointed out, “The Sermons of John Sherlock shaped Henry as did the *Book Apology for the Bible* by Bishop Watson.”<sup>37</sup> Morgan wrote, “He read Sherlock’s Sermons every Sunday evening to his family, after which they all joined in sacred music while he accompanied them on the violin.”<sup>38</sup>

Relying on Romans 13, Henry argued that every nation and the state government were created by and for God. A government honoring God could have a much more personal relationship with the Creator and perhaps even receive His blessings. Biographer William Wirt (1772–1834) explained of Henry:

He had no doubt, that God, who in former ages hardened Pharaoh’s heart, that he might show forth his power and glory in the redemption of his chosen people. It was for the people to determine whether they were worthy of this divine interference, whether they

<sup>27</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), 233.

<sup>28</sup> Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 387.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the American People* (New York: Harper, 1997), 207.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 255.

<sup>32</sup> Kidd, *Patrick Henry: First Among Patriots*, 233.

<sup>33</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 255.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>36</sup> Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry*, 366.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

would accept the high boon now held out to them by heaven.<sup>39</sup>

Before statehood, in the 1760s, when establishing the colony of Virginia, Henry set two essential goals in sight. He desired “Christian religious freedom and the elimination of slavery.”<sup>40</sup> Henry argued that establishing Christianity as a mandatory state religion would essentially shut down slavery due to the moral teachings and codes contained within the faith.<sup>41</sup> He pointed to the despair faced in Virginia in comparison to Pennsylvania. Henry wrote, “Pennsylvania is the country of the most extensive privileges with few slaves.”<sup>42</sup> Henry was adamant that God had blessed Pennsylvania due to its liberty, particularly as many within the colony opposed slavery. Modern-day Reformed theologian Nelson Kloosterman explains the harsh reality of morality without God:

Turning from dependence on God to dependence on themselves, human beings began to display the fruit of infidelity or faithfulness by ascribing to themselves what belongs to God alone and applying to God what applies only to the creature. Disorder and confusion replaced order and harmony, disintegration replaced integration, through all of creation, among human beings, and within individuals themselves.<sup>43</sup>

Adhering to a sovereign God, Henry knew that Christian morality was superior to human morality. After all, according to his worldview, humans were fallible. This was

evident within his own life. Henry “never freed his slaves.”<sup>44</sup> Later he stated, “Would anyone believe that I am Master of Slaves of my own purchase! I am drawn along by the general inconvenience of living without them; I will not, I cannot justify it.”<sup>45</sup>

Henry sought a Virginia that would financially support Christian churches, adhere to the Biblical principles of law, and in his view, establish equality amongst civil and religious freedom.<sup>46</sup> Without the Christian religion being embraced by a state or the federal government, he feared this nation would self-destruct, and he often used slavery as a prime example of his view.<sup>47</sup> Henry argued that if the government relied on God, it would be unstoppable. He said, “There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us.”<sup>48</sup> Ironically, his prediction later came true in the fight for independence, as France became an ally with the colonies to establish America as an independent nation.<sup>49</sup> According to Henry, this was the work of a sovereign Creator.

Founding Father Henry Lee wrote in 1790, “Henry is already considered a prophet.”<sup>50</sup> His fellow Americans recognized his faith and worldview and did not deny his passion for the Christian religion. One Baptist pastor asked, “Why follow Henry? He is not a god.”<sup>51</sup> Henry replied, “No indeed, my friend; I am but a poor worm of the dust—as fleeting and unsubstantial as the shadow of the cloud that flies over your fields and is remembered no more.”<sup>52</sup> Scholars often look to Henry and

<sup>39</sup> Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 139.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin J. Hayes, *The Mind of a Patriot: Patrick Henry and the World of Ideas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 63.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>43</sup> Nelson Kloosterman, *Calvin for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Heritage Books, 2009), 199.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Hayes, *The Mind of a Patriot*, 66.

<sup>46</sup> Unger, *Lion of Liberty*, 167.

<sup>47</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 200.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.* 201.

<sup>51</sup> Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 393.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

argue that slavery could have been eliminated earlier if others had embraced his principles.<sup>53</sup>

It is worth mentioning that many Founding Fathers simply did not get along with Henry. The most notable was Jefferson. It was clear that Jefferson and Henry disagreed on political issues and religious freedom. Jefferson was very critical of him at times, even stating, “He was a man of very little knowledge of any sort; he read nothing and had no books.”<sup>54</sup> At the time, many viewed books as a “foundation of social capital.”<sup>55</sup> Jefferson added of Henry, “He is the laziest man in reading I ever knew.”<sup>56</sup>

A clash of worldviews further prevented the two men from ever establishing a long-lasting friendship. Jefferson, a well-known Deist, disagreed intensely with Henry on a Christian government. In 1784, Henry was officially shut down, making Virginia free from any church ties.<sup>57</sup> Presbyterians, Baptists, George Washington, and John Marshall aligned with Madison and Jefferson.<sup>58</sup> Though Henry remained persistent in seeking state “support for Teachers of the Christian Religions,” Virginia remained free of any Christian government.<sup>59</sup> Madison declared:

Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity, in exclusion of all other Religions, may establish with the same ease any particular sect of Christians, in exclusion of all other Sects? That the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute three pence only of his property for the support of any one establishment, may force him to

conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever?<sup>60</sup>

Madison’s views were relatively simple; he argued that if one were to establish a Christian Virginia, what denomination would hold authority? He argued that significant theological differences existed among Christians and that complete harmony was impossible. On Virginia’s decision to separate from religion, Professor Larry Schweikart noted, “Virginia refused to fund ministers’ salaries, and the idea of individual religion grew stronger, rather than the form or structure of Christianity.”<sup>61</sup> In one of the earliest works ever written on Henry (1818), William Wirt argued Henry sought religious diversity in all of his proposed bills:

If there be any evidence of a leaning towards any particular religious sect in this bill, or any indication of a desire for an established church, the author of these sketches has not been able to discover them. Mr. Henry was a sincere believer in the Christian religion and had a strong desire for the successful propagation of the gospel, but there was no tincture of bigotry or intolerance in his sentiments; nor have I been able to learn that he had a punctilious preference for any particular form of worship.<sup>62</sup>

Morality was at the heart of Henry’s “Christian government and education argument.”<sup>63</sup> Professor of Political Science James R. Rogers argued that “Henry’s views on forming a Christian government are often

<sup>53</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 201.

<sup>54</sup> Hayes, *The Mind of a Patriot*, 7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Unger, *Lion of Liberty*, 167.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> William J. Bennett, *America the Last Best Hope Volume I* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), 111.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen, *A Patriot’s History of the United States* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004), 97.

<sup>62</sup> Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 245.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

misjudged.”<sup>64</sup> However, Henry did seek Biblical influence. He writes:

Christian teaching, he suggests, tends to “correct the morals of men, restrain their vices, and preserve the peace of society.” Telling the truth, keeping one’s word, dealing with others honestly in trade as well as in personal matters, not stealing or acting violently against others: all of these are goods that promote the temporal interests of civil society.<sup>65</sup>

According to Rogers, Henry’s main argument was for “Biblical morality to be shared through the means of education.”<sup>66</sup> Henry never backed away from the view of God being sovereign. Henry’s religious beliefs shaped his entire life. He regularly “preached and shared the gospel” to legislatures. At a time when racial tensions were high within the Commonwealth of Virginia, Henry was on record as desiring peace with Native Americans.<sup>67</sup> Christian revivalist Lady Huntington sought his help in evangelizing the Indians and establishing Native American territories, protecting them from attacks.<sup>68</sup> He supported Huntington’s plan, but Congress’s approval was essential to support the financial grants necessary for such a plan.<sup>69</sup> The proposal ultimately failed, but some scholars argue that it could have prevented many “blood-filled” battles in Virginia.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to evangelizing Native Americans, Henry sought to establish Christianity in public schools. He stated that:  
Schools will also be established.  
Children will be educated in them to

religion and virtue, in a liberal manner agreeably to that great principle of Christianity, Love to God, universal charity and good-will to all mankind. They will also be instructed in useful knowledge so that they may become good Christians and useful members of the Community.<sup>71</sup>

Rachel Wilson of the Society of Friends wrote, “Henry had a great respect for the Christian religion.”<sup>72</sup> Henry was known to have a great relationship “with many Christians, from Quakers to Baptists.”<sup>73</sup> Baptists were often ridiculed and under attack. It is believed, Henry “rode 50 miles on one occasion to come to the aid of local Baptists.”<sup>74</sup> Further, Virginia Baptist Rev. John Weatherford was arrested for “unlicensed preaching.”<sup>75</sup> Henry came to his aid, as George Morgan wrote:

So interested did Henry become in this work that he paid out of his own pocket the jail fees of the Rev. John Weatherford, whose release in Chesterfield County had been secured through his agency. Not for twenty years did this clergyman know that Henry had been his good angel.<sup>76</sup>

Henry could not separate Christianity from life or politics. He embraced a Christian worldview that shaped his own legacy. Often recognized for his humility and respect, he believed in a sovereign, active Creator. Wirt mentioned if there was one sin that “conquered Henry, it was the love of money.”<sup>77</sup> While some historians note that he struggled in his faith in his prime political

<sup>64</sup> James R. Rogers, “Patrick Henry’s Very Modern Proposal,” *First Things: Journal of Religion and Public Life*, August 20, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 184.

<sup>68</sup> Vaughan, *Give Me Liberty*, 185.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid..

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry*, 125.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>77</sup> Wirt, *Sketches of the Life and Character of Patrick Henry*, 403.

years, many compared him to King David. By “1795 his health was failing, he lost an interest in political affairs and devoted his time to reading the Bible and spending time with his children.”<sup>78</sup> He said of the Bible, “This book is worth all the books that ever were printed.”<sup>79</sup> Historian Harlow Unger argued, “Henry sought repentance in his later years and desired to show his family how much he loved them.”<sup>80</sup>

Henry preached the gospel to his doctor on his death bed and urged him to believe in Christ.<sup>81</sup> After his passing, his possessions were distributed amongst his wife and children. It is written that his final request was the following, “This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear family. The religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.”<sup>82</sup> While the Commonwealth of Virginia never adopted Christianity as a state religion, the Virginia model of religious liberty found itself in the First Amendment of the United States. Virginia State Legislator William Wirt wrote on Patrick’s legacy, “To Henry, therefore, great credit goes. To him, we are indebted for the article in the Virginia Bill of Rights securing Religious Liberty and for the First Amendment of the Federal Constitution embodying the same principle.”<sup>83</sup>

Wirt Henry adds:

The adoption of this principle (Religious Liberty) as the chief cornerstone of American Government, and its subsequent progress in other portions of the world, indicating that it is destined to become all-prevailing as Christian civilization advances, with an inestimable blessing which flows from it, make Mr. Henry’s act in causing its insertion in the Virginia

Bill of Rights the most important of his life. If it had been the only act of his public life, it was sufficient to have enrolled his name among the greatest benefactors of the race.<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusion

It would be a mistake to deny Christianity’s influence in shaping Henry into the man he was. Due to the influences of his mother, father and pastor, he was destined to declare Christianity as his truth and live it out as an authentic worldview. While his desire to establish Christianity as a state and federal religion failed, all believers in Christ must respect and honor the motivations behind his principles. Henry viewed God as sovereign and everlasting. He feared that immorality could destroy his country and its people. Henry had some legitimate concerns with immorality and its influence on America. He struggled with sin, acknowledging the travesty of slavery.

It is true that many Deists strongly opposed Henry, and most notably they won. Christianity would never become the state religion. Interestingly enough, in the modern era, “one-third of Americans fit the description of a deist.”<sup>85</sup> While genuine believers in Christ acknowledge that Christianity cannot be forced on a soul, it must be personal, the legacy of Deism and the Founder Fathers is troubling at the very least.

The point must be made, then, that Henry’s intentions were pure, and his concerns were valid. Immorality can destroy and lead a nation in the wrong direction. At the same time, religious freedom in the United States still is second to none. And as Wirt pointed out, this is in large part due to Henry and his fight for religious liberty. While

<sup>78</sup> Unger, *Lion of Liberty*, 266.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry*, 267.

<sup>84</sup> Morgan, *The True Patrick Henry*, 267.

<sup>85</sup> Paul Froese and Christopher Bader, *America’s Four Gods* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33.

disagreeing with Madison and Jefferson on distancing legislation from Christianity, Henry still fought tirelessly for religious freedom.

Americans still, for the time being, have the right to freely worship Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The Christian must respect and never forget Henry and his love for God. Henry can still be honored today, with Christians standing up for Christ and fighting for His truth. In his later years, Henry sought repentance, forgiveness, and love. These are all traits we value today.

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## Pearls of Wisdom: Little Pieces of Advice (That Go a Long Way)

Author: Barbara Bush

Publisher: Twelve, 2020

Reviewer  
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Barbara Bush, former First Lady of the United States, was known for her strong opinions. It did not matter who you were, whether it be a family member, a friend, a colleague, or a stranger, Mrs. Bush always had something to say and oftentimes her words of wisdom strongly impacted those around her. *In Pearls of Wisdom: Little Pieces of Advice (That Go a Long Way)*, Jean Becker, Mrs. Bush's deputy secretary, long-time speech writer, and employee for nearly 30 years, highlighted some of Mrs. Bush's most popular bits of advice and showed how those words of wisdom influenced those around her.

This book is unique in that Barbara Bush is named as the author even though the book was written posthumously. Becker compiled these nuggets of wisdom from Mrs. Bush's own writings, which included her speeches, diaries, and letters. She also asked those close to Mrs. Bush to submit memories about her and advice she had given them over the years. Becker served as the narrator with Mrs. Bush's voice clearly present in the pages of the book. A rather short book with only seven chapters, *Pearls of Wisdom* is organized into memories from Bush's children, grandchildren, extended family, friends, and those outside her immediate circle.

The book began with essays written by her five children: President George W. Bush, Governor Jeb Bush, Neil Bush, Marvin Bush, and Doro Bush Koch. Barbara Bush, like any mother, gave her children advice. She gave them practical advice telling them to "Be yourself. Be on time. Value your friends." She taught them how to love and how to be good parents. "Mom taught us to 'love one another'. There wasn't a moment I've been on this planet that I didn't really feel loved by Mom," said Marvin Bush. Governor Jeb Bush also remembered his mother's love for her children and grandchildren and how she taught him to be a good father. "Mom always had the firm belief that a successful life is defined first and foremost by loving your children with all of your heart and soul." Her children also reflected that their mom taught them to laugh and not take themselves too seriously. "Mom had a sharp and quick wit," said President George W. Bush while brother Neil Bush said his mom had "sharp humor." Daughter Doro Bush Koch agreed. "She always keeps us guessing at what she might say next! But the truth is, my mother's unpredictable and colorful language has led to a life filled with entertainment and joy."

Mrs. Bush's advice extended beyond her children to her grandchildren, cousins, and even in-laws. Granddaughter Jenna Bush Hager fondly remembered her Ganny, as she called her, telling her that "Words matter; kindness matters; looks fade." Hager said that her grandmother taught her how to be authentic and real.

Friends and colleagues also shared their fond memories of the Bush family matriarch. Susan Baker, her friend for over fifty-five years, recalled how Mrs. Bush showed what she called

“quiet kindness” and was an encouragement to others. “Bar taught us volumes about who are neighbors are and how to love them,” said Baker.

The next part of the book showed how Mrs. Bush impacted people outside of her close circle, especially students. Throughout her life, Mrs. Bush’s commitment to students was evident whether it was reading to kindergarteners or speaking at college commencement services. In all situations, Mrs. Bush’s advice was similar. “Do something every day to make the world better. Be kind to everyone. Serve others.” Mrs. Bush’s passion in life was to make sure all students, not just the ones she encountered, could read. Her championing of literacy was a life-long cause. To her, literacy was the bedrock of a successful society. “Literacy is not just learning to read and write better. It’s people making better choices, raising children, doing old and new jobs better, and being better citizens all around,” said Mrs. Bush in a speech in 1992 for the Lubbock, Texas, Area Literacy Coalition.

In addition to students, Mrs. Bush’s influence and words of wisdom extended to speaking to and encouraging military families during the Gulf War, supporting her husband by speaking at political events, and supporting important causes such as the AID/HIV crisis of the 1980s and 1990s. Debbie Tate and Joan McCarley were the founders of Grandma’s House, a facility that housed children with HIV/AIDS. When Mrs. Bush visited their facility, they described it as “unforgettable.” “Debbie and Joan, you’re providing great care and services but give me that baby, you don’t know what you’re doing!” said Bush. In that moment, they remarked Mrs. Bush was a grandmother who showed deep compassion and care for sick children.

The final portion of this book provided an in depth look from some of Mrs. Bush’s closest friends and confidants. Her wisdom and influence were felt far and wide. From author Mary Higgins Clark to former President Bill Clinton to her personal aide, all wrote how much Mrs. Bush meant to them. Evan Sisley, a navy corpsman and paramedic, oversaw the Bushes medical care during the last several years of their lives. Even at the end of her life, Mrs. Bush’s quick wit and opinion never faded. Sisley recalled that Mrs. Bush’s husband was taking a breathing treatment and was “...periodically puffing on it from the

corner of his mouth like it was a pipe.” Sisley said that Mrs. Bush walked in the room and said, “George, you really must shut your mouth!” She was, of course, referring to the fact that he needed to do the treatment properly.

Barbara Bush will forever be known as the spunky First Lady whose opinion, advice, and wisdom was far-reaching. Out of all the advice given over Mrs. Bush’s 92 years, the one thing that stood out in this book was a simple yet profound statement. “Faith, family, and friends are the only things you really need in life.”





