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RACISM IN AMERICA'S CHURCHES:
A CLOSER LOOK

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by
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EXPLANATION OF TOPIC

A noteworthy but often overlooked social phenomenon in America today is the harboring of racist ideologies, conscious or unconscious, by church members who also hold to the Christian belief of love for all humankind. This paradoxical coexistence of logically contradictory ideologies is manifested in the segregation of church congregations, as well as in the personal lives of church members all over our nation, including Robeson County, North Carolina. My focus will be upon white racism, the exercise of prejudice and discrimination by white people toward people of color, particularly blacks. Certainly other types of racism exist, such as blacks toward whites, but I have chosen white racism as the object of my study in the interest of a workable topic and because of my perception of it as more pervasive and more readily observed than the other types.

I became interested in this topic by observation of some white citizens of Robeson County who, while pillars of their respective churches, exhibited highly racist attitudes. I was compelled to understand how these people could justify their actions within the framework of their religious belief and commitment. Also of interest to me were the historical processes involved in producing segregated churches, particularly in the Baptist churches of Robeson County. My findings on these two issues are the main substance of this paper.

Whether or not racial divisions in Baptist churches in Robeson County arose in hostility, they contribute to continuing strife between races in the county by serving as a barrier to tolerance and acceptance of the races for each other. Taken one step further, I would venture to say that if the church segregation were minimized, more successful social integration in other social settings would follow.

The church has potentially enormous power to combat racism in society as a whole, if only because of its large membership and its overlap into other social institutions. At a glance, it may seem that the church as an agent of social justice is effective as such and is successful in exerting a substantial influence on the actions of faithful churchgoers in terms of helping them form nonracist mindsets; after all, the basic assumptions of Christianity and racism are logically contradictory. However, Christianity historically has allowed racism to lie beneath the surface of its ideals, and Christians have often been the instigators of some of the most serious forms of racism. In many cases, even though the church may not be the actual source of racism, it helps perpetuate it by generally refusing to take a firm, visible stand against it and by existing as a highly segregated institution. In completing this thesis, I hope to uncover some of the veiled racism in the church and to create a catalyst for change.

CASE STUDIES/EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Several examples of racial prejudice among North Carolina church members illustrate how common and how strong the problem is among some who claim the name "Christian". On April 4, 1988, Easter Sunday, a Southern Baptist minister in southwestern North Carolina attended a nearby black church with his wife since their church had cancelled services. Three days later, "Ken" was receiving highly negative phone calls and comments from members of his church who had heard of his chosen place of worship that Sunday. His perception of the parishioners' reaction was that he was about to be "run off" from the church; he described the situation as "pretty hot," and dreaded facing the people. He could not believe what he was hearing--"They don't want me to love my black brothers and sisters."

In the winter of 1987, a Southern Baptist minister in Robeson County came into conflict when he invited a black boy to join the church youth group. "Timmy," the boy, was a longtime friend of the other youngsters in the group, had expressed a desire to be a member of the group, and the minister saw no reason to exclude him from the youth activities. When the three deacons of the church were informed of the invitation, however, two of them reacted angrily, telling the minister that blacks simply did not come to their church and that "Timmy" would not be allowed to enter the building. One of the two irate deacons threatened violence on the minister for daring to think of

allowing a black person into the church, and ordered him to leave the community that night. (He did not.)

The same minister heard a faithful member of the nearby Church of God publicly expounding his view of blacks: "They just can't grasp the Bible like we can--they've been cursed by God somewhere along there." The same view of the black race being cursed was expressed on the Oprah Winfrey show on June 14, 1988, when a fundamentalist Christian was being interviewed about his children preaching at their school in Marion, NC. This view is typical of some fundamentalist groups who take the biblical curse on Noah's son Ham as an indication that Ham's descendants, whom these groups claim to be the black race, are cursed forever as well. This and similar interpretations of other scriptural excerpts are often used as justification for separation of the races and degradation of non-whites. However, more of the less overt racism among mainstream church members is supported not by the scriptures or by the stance of the church's organization, but by beliefs not at all intended to serve such a purpose, such as the free will doctrine and the miracle motif to be discussed later in the paper.

How churches in Robeson County came to be segregated

First I did some studying to find out how Baptist churches and associations in Robeson County came to be racially divided and whether they began that way. Although the primary focus of this paper is church segregation of blacks and whites, in studying the churches of Robeson County it would be a mistake to leave out the Lumbee Indians, who make up nearly a third of the county's population. Therefore, I have included the Lumbee Indians along with blacks and whites in this section of the paper. I chose to study Baptists because I am Baptist myself, so this was the denomination of interest to me, and because Baptist churches are extremely well represented in Robeson County. In particular, I examined the histories of these Baptist bodies: Robeson Baptist Association, Saddletree Baptist Church, Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, Smyrna Baptist Church, Lumber River Baptist Association, and First Baptist Church Lumberton.

In reviewing the minutes of some of the first sessions of Robeson Baptist Association, an almost exclusively white subdivision of the Southern Baptist Convention (a predominantly white denomination), I discovered that there was already a division between black and white Baptists in 1883, even though some white churches reported having a few black members. Incidentally, these black members, although counted on the church rolls, generally were not allowed to hold office in the church and

were made to sit apart from the rest of the church, such as in the balcony. The largest number was at Back Swamp church at Cerro Gordo, where 12 of the 176 members were black. The history of Saddletree Church, the oldest in Robeson Baptist Association, indicates that slaves were counted as members but sat in the balcony of the church. Records indicated that in 1848 there were 120 total members and 39 slaves attending.

Lumber River Colored Association (later named the Lumber River Baptist Association), having been recently formed, had asked for and had been granted assistance, in the form of education and forming churches, from the Robeson Baptist Association. Excerpts from the thirteenth and twenty-third sessions (1895 and 1905) of Robeson Baptist Association will help to clarify the thinking of white Baptists toward their black counterparts:

The work most needed is educating the colored preachers. These leaders of the weird and superstitious worship of the colored people hold in their hands the destiny of their race. The negro has a strange religious capacity and must be reached at last mainly from his religious side. These preachers ought to be taught, that they may go and teach their people.

There is some work being done among the negroes in the South. Why should we neglect the

negro at home and send missionaries to Africa?
The negroes in Africa, if left alone will only remain a heathen. The negro here is and will continue to be either a help or a hindrance. Why not make him a help by teaching him morals and religion?

The 1902 minutes claimed that one half of Baptists were black, and that there were one half million blacks in the Baptist churches of the South. It was not clear whether these blacks were mainly in churches separate from the whites or whether the churches were mixed. My own opinion is that the majority of these blacks were in separate congregations; the issues of slavery and the civil war, along with problems during Reconstruction had caused too great a schism for blacks and whites to truly "be church" together.

The minutes seemed to indicate a different attitude about the Lumbee Indians. All during the first years of the Robeson Baptist Association, white Baptists were continually pleased with their work with the Lumbees, which was on a missions basis. The work with the Lumbees was direct, meaning that Southern Baptists were taking them "into the fold" and were working very closely with them, whereas the work with the blacks was more detached. There were recurring references to the "cooperative plan," in which blacks were given assistance with the idea that they would continue the work on their own. Even today, the Southern Baptist

Convention maintains Cooperative Ministries, a peripheral alliance with the black General Baptist Convention. It was and is a much more hands-off operation for most Southern Baptists than are missions and other direct programs.

Next, I studied the Burnt Swamp Baptist Association, a predominantly Lumbee Indian subdivision of the Southern Baptist Convention. Interviews and histories indicate that power and/or identity issues were at the heart of the Lumbee separation from the white Baptist church. Lumbee Indians were definitely considered non-white, but wanted to be distinguished from blacks and from other Indians, and this still holds true today. Burnt Swamp Association, though begun as a mission project of the North Carolina State Southern Baptist Convention, is now fully financially independent. It is the only self-sustaining, Indian, Southern Baptist association in the United States. It seems that cultural differences and the Lumbee experience of not being wanted (as opposed to not wanting others) in their churches were at the root of separation of the Lumbees from the whites.

One of the Burnt Swamp churches, Smyrna, began when Indians pulled out of the white Antioch Baptist Church in 1888 to begin their own church. There were no indications of great hostility, although the whites did seem to have a problem with Indians holding too many offices, and consequently having too much power, in the church. Gradually the Lumbees left, and the last Lumbee member to leave Antioch did so in the 1930's.

As mentioned before, the Lumber River Baptist Association, a black subdivision of the predominately black General Baptist Convention, existed prior to 1883. The Lumber River Baptist Association and the General Baptist Convention are affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., which was formed in 1895 to unify black regional church bodies. There were two principal factors which led to the exodus of black Baptists from white churches: 1) discrimination and segregation as policy in white churches--this included accomodation to slavery, and 2) a theological awakening among black preachers. This second factor is explained in Leroy Fitts' book A History of Black Baptists: "they discovered in the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man a new anthropological concept of human freedom and dignity."¹ This led to a heightened social consciousness and a more holistic ministry not only to the spiritual part of the person, but to the physical, social, and political self as well.

The largest church in the Lumber River Baptist Association is First Baptist Church of Lumberton. FBC Lumberton used to be known as FBC Colored of Lumberton, and was founded in 1922 in a union of two black Baptist churches. By this time, it was understood that blacks went to their own churches, and since First Baptist was not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in any way, there was no tendency to have non-black members or ruling officers.

Church Segregation in Robeson County Today

Baptist churches in Robeson County remain largely segregated today. I interviewed area ministers, one from each major category of race in Robeson County, concerning their opinions about church segregation in order to understand some different viewpoints besides my own. I asked about segregation's negative and positive points, why it exists, whether churches should be integrated, whether they know of any functioning, well-integrated Baptist churches in Robeson County, and how they felt racial integration in churches would affect overall race relations in Robeson County.

Only the Lumbee Indian minister indicated positive points in church segregation. He said it allows for 1) expression of emotionalism of the Lumbee, 2) development of Lumbee leadership skills, and 3) community access to a church. The white minister acknowledged these points from a different perspective. He believes that segregation is functional for the survival of many churches due to longstanding tradition and for cultural preservation, but that the sacrifices of integration would be worth the new consciousness and sense of true Christian brother/sisterhood that would be brought about. The Lumbee minister noted that society has begun to change church attitudes through increased intermarriage and integration of school systems. The black minister believes that segregation is totally dysfunctional and that whatever benefits it may have are

superficial and are in no way vital to the survival of the church; rather, they are hindrances to the church's true goals.

When asked why segregation exists in churches, the ministers' answers were varied. The Lumbee minister cited cultural differences as the cause. The black minister gave three major reasons: 1) the people who support segregation in churches are not Christian, 2) the church is too heavily influenced by a discriminatory society, and 3) fear and ignorance. The white minister blamed the handing down of racist mindsets from generation to generation and the failure of the church to interrupt this cycle.

All of the ministers agreed that churches ideally should be integrated, but that the issue cannot be forced. There was a consensus that the doors in every church should be opened to anyone who might want to come; in other words, every person should have the privilege to choose to go to any Christian church. None knew of an operating integrated Baptist church in Robeson County. The white minister used the term selective integration to explain instances in which one or two blacks might be in regular attendance at a white church; for example, they might be people of high community prestige or special musical talent.

In answer to the question of how the doors to racial integration might be opened, the ministers' voices resounded with the word education. There was agreement that through education and preparation through teaching in churches and homes would be built the foundation for the road to

acceptance of those shunned by churches on the basis of race. The white minister emphasized that personal, one-on-one bridgebuilding by white ministers to other racial communities and vice versa would be an important step as well. All of the ministers agreed that more integrated churches would positively affect overall race relations in Robeson County.

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND SUGGESTED EXPLANATIONS

Summary of Previous Research

Much research has been conducted on the subject of the coexistence of Christianity and racism, calling attention to the fact that it is a significant problem. Gorsuch and Aleshire (1974) made an intensive review of the studies that have been conducted up to 1974 with the intent of bringing together the varying results into one manageable, conclusive body of research. In their review they allow for variations between studies in how religious commitment is measured, measurement of prejudice (differing scales), religious homogeneity of survey participants, geographical differences, and the year in which data was collected. Therefore the summary they generated was an attempt to build a general conclusion from studies which occasionally contradicted one another.

Gorsuch and Aleshire found that in regard to measuring religious commitment, studies showed that church members were more prejudiced than nonmembers when church membership was the only criterion. However, when the criteria included level of involvement and motivation for involvement, studies showed that the most active church members were the about as prejudiced as, if not less prejudiced than nonmembers. Marginal members, or those moderately active, less intrinsically motivated church members, were shown to be the most prejudiced of all. Hence,

there is variation in religious commitment among church members that in turn effects a variation in prejudice levels, and this variation can be measured by religious beliefs and attitudes and religious activity. This is called differentiation of religious commitment. Gorsuch and Aleshire concluded that studies which allowed for such differentiation were much more accurate than others in describing the variations in racial prejudice according to church membership and degree of religious commitment.²

One study that addressed responses to racist attitudes was conducted in 1957 by Ernest Campbell and Thomas Pettigrew. They were studying the role played by Protestant ministers in the school desegregation controversy in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was observed that the great majority of ministers was not willing to speak from the pulpit on the issue at all. The ministers who did speak in favor of desegregation generally did so by prefacing their remarks with "aligning actions," which served to lighten the impact and challenge of their statements.³ An example of an aligning action would be something like the pastor's saying, "What I'm about to speak on is something that has burdened my heart. I express this feeling as one opinion of many, and everyone is entitled to their own opinions." This allows the following remarks to come across as much less confrontative and offensive, making the minister's position more comfortable and secure. Compare that aligning action with a more arousing introduction: "Christian friends, it is part of my calling to serve as a prophet to you, often

bringing good tidings of great joy, and sometimes as often calling attention to our own conscious, habitual failures as humans to live up to God's standards. May you open your heart and mind to examine our wrongness in not loving and recognizing our brothers and sisters of another race as exactly the same as we are in God's eyes." Certainly this would be a more direct way of approaching the problem, more likely to elicit a response from those who hear.

Unfortunately, religious leaders often are too quick to rule out such an approach for fear of making waves. This was a problem not only in the Deep South in 1957, but it is a problem in every region in our country today.

Since racial tension in the church and a general lack of action by the church as a whole to relieve this tension (in ways other than by avoidance) are problems that have been heavily researched, it will help to examine some of the suggestions that have been made as to why these problems exist.

Theoretical Perspectives/Suggested Explanations

Cognitive structuralism, the we/they (reference group) theory and the conflict perspective are but three of the theories that have been used to attempt to explain the coexistence of racism and Christianity within the ranks of the church. Important related ideas include the effects of religious beliefs such as the free will doctrine and the miracle motif on attitudes and actions, the influence of

traditional values and civil religion on attitudes and actions, symbolic racism, and intrinsic versus extrinsic measures of religiosity. All of these approaches to study can provide useful insight into the tension of racial controversy among churchgoers.

cognitive structuralism: Cognitive structuralism suggests that people go through several stages of development in their thinking toward the rest of the world. Kohlberg and Perry are two sociologists who have embraced cognitive structuralism. Kohlberg suggests three basic levels of thinking through which all persons begin to pass: egocentric, ethnocentric, and universalistic (as interpreted by Roberts).⁴ Egocentric people tend to have a self-oriented world view, seeing right and wrong only in terms of what benefits themselves. Ethnocentric people define what is right in terms of the norms of their primary group members, or those who are closest to them. Universalistic people are more concerned with the rights of all people, whether or not they are members of one's own group. Kohlberg specifies two stages within each level, and asserts that a person may become "frozen" at any one stage. According to Kohlberg's classification, people in stage three, the first stage of ethnocentrism, are looking for popularity and "fitting in" rather than personal decisions regarding right and wrong according to the standards of a belief system. The idea here is that when people do not move past stage three toward a more universalistic type of

thinking, they are frozen at that stage and become highly dualistic. In their thinking, everything is either right or wrong with nothing in between; right becomes associated with the familiar or that which is believed and practiced by "us," and wrong similarly becomes associated with the unfamiliar or that which is believed and practiced by anybody except "us." The stage thus is set for many types of prejudice toward the out-group.⁵

we/they or reference group theory: Feelings of in-group and out-group identification are also the focus of the we/they, or reference group, theory of prejudice. However, where the cognitive structuralism theory cites dualistic thinking as the root of prejudice towards those unlike "us," the reference group theory cites the formation of high group boundaries when individuals bind themselves together in close units. Churches, like any other organization, classify participants as members and give them a sense of belonging by serving as the reference group, or the group with whom they want to be identified and to whose norms they want to conform. As members become more and more an integral part of the group, they may develop strong feelings of "us" and "them," insiders versus outsiders. This may be conscious or unconscious on the part of the church member, but there is growing recognition that people outside the group are different from those inside the group. In this way, religion unintentionally may contribute to prejudice by

creating group boundaries that are too high to allow a nonstereotypical view of people outside those boundaries.◊

conflict perspective: The conflict perspective tends to support the idea of existing religious institutions, beliefs, and traditions as a justification for racism. To explain, we must set forth the basic views entailed in the conflict perspective. This perspective sees society as an equilibrium in which people and classes are struggling for resources: jobs, property, money, power, etc. Since not everyone can have the greatest power, the greatest wealth, the best jobs, education, or the most property, one group, usually relatively small, will control the distribution of resources at any given time. This group, in order to maintain its advantageous position, will construct insulators to keep the controlled portion of the population at a distance so as not to share the resources. Examples of such insulators include 1) a stereotype of the disadvantaged group, 2) discrimination against the disadvantaged group, and 3) arrangement of social institutions that reinforces the position of the upper class group in control. Within this framework, religion would be understood as having been set up to support the status quo.

free will doctrine: Many researchers have concluded that the Christian emphasis on free will has contributed to racism among church members in America. This doctrine

implies that each person is responsible for his/her own actions and destiny; therefore, if a person does not advance in life, it must be that person's fault and no one else's. In other words, advantaged Christians might tend, because of the doctrine of free will, to blame those who are disadvantaged for their circumstances. Since more minorities than whites are disadvantaged in our society, unconditional acceptance of the free will doctrine may serve as an explanation and as a way to take the burden off the society which precipitates the oppression. Researchers hesitate to say that such beliefs cause racism, but rather that they serve as a pillar of support and justification for it.⁷

Miracle motif: Researchers Glock and Stark in 1969 identified the phenomenon of the "miracle motif," adherence to which may contribute to the maintenance of racist attitudes among religious people. Roberts has described Glock and Stark's miracle motif as "the expectation that God will bring change only when the divinely appointed time arrives. Furthermore, change will occur without the benefit--and despite the opposition--of human resources. Hence, human effort is viewed as futile."⁸ In other words, people can justify segregation and discrimination by asserting that God will change things when He wants to do so, and can thereby justify also their lack of action in matters of social injustice. In his famous "I Have a Dream" address in Washington on August 28, 1963, Martin Luther

King, Jr. labelled such an attitude an addiction to "the tranquilizing drug of gradualism." Nonetheless, this miracle motif serves many people with a religious exemption from responsibility when it comes to racism.

influence of traditional values and civil religion:

Often it can be found that the belief system of the church is itself not what is helping to form racist attitudes, because those beliefs are not influencing the person's attitudes at all. Instead, there are other factors that come into play. As Wayne G. Johnson has stated, the church has become "a group which roots its focus of identity in secular factors" and therefore "tends to be peculiarly victimized by racist mentality and action."⁹ The church member may actually be a follower of civil religion, which may or may not match up with the doctrinal ideals of the church. That person may actually think he or she is acting according to church/religious rules when that is not actually the case. Civil religion is a term used by Robert Bellah to describe "a set of religious beliefs, symbols, and rituals growing out of the American historical experience interpreted in the dimension of transcendence."¹⁰ It is a body of traditional values in American culture that is derived less from a purely religious Protestantism than it is from a secularized version of Protestantism that celebrates the political, economic, and ethical "American Way of Life."¹¹ McConahay and Hough have found that socialization to these traditional American values, or civil

religion, is more significant than are denominational doctrines in producing a certain type of racism to be discussed below: symbolic racism.¹²

symbolic racism: Identification with traditional American values, whether religious or secular, has been found to correlate positively with a certain type of racism called symbolic racism. McDonahay and Hough conducted a study to investigate what they called "a new form of antiblack feelings, attitudes, and behaviors perceived to be emerging among relatively affluent, suburban segments of the American white population."¹³ They defined this symbolic racism as

the expression by suburban whites in terms of abstract ideological symbols and symbolic behaviors of the feeling that blacks are violating cherished values and making illegitimate demands for changes in the racial status quo.¹⁴

The irony in symbolic racism is that it has emerged at a time when conventional measures of racism show a decreasing amount of racism among American whites, implying that conventional measures are no longer sufficient to evaluate racism in American society. McDonahay and Hough used three different racism scales to address the near obsolescence of conventional measures and to see which scale

would indicate most effectively the issue of symbolic racism. One scale measured traditional "red-neck racism," the type associated with overt racist actions of hatred, bigotry and support for legal segregation. A second scale served to uncover racist tendencies in much more subtle ways. It was called the "sympathetic identification with the underdog" scale, and was used to attempt to find out how much a white person would sympathize with a black person being insulted or harmed in some way. The third scale was the symbolic racism scale, which measured attitudes that blacks as a group were getting more than they deserved. The researchers used these statements to assess symbolic racism:

- 1) Negroes are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.
- 2) Whites should support Negroes in their struggle against discrimination and segregation.
- 3) It is easy to understand the anger of black people in America.
- 4) Negroes have it better than they ever had it before.

Agreement with the first and fourth items and disagreement with the second and third were scored as indicating symbolic racism.¹⁵

Intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity: Intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are terms used to describe the

motivation for an individual's religious commitment and activity. These categories have been found to be very useful for differentiation of religious commitment as advocated by Gorsuch and Aleshire (see page 14 of this paper) and thus for measuring prejudice levels among church members. Allport distinguished intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for religious commitment in 1963:

Extrinsic religion...is something to use but not to live. And it may be used in a variety of ways: to improve one's status, to bolster one's self-confidence, to enhance one's income, to win friends, power or influence...as a defense against reality, and, most importantly, to provide a supersanction for one's own formula for living.

Intrinsic religion...is not primarily a means of handling fear, or a mode of conformity, or an attempted sublimation of sex, or a wish-fulfillment...This commitment is partly intellectual, but more fundamentally motivated. ...It is a hunger for, and a commitment to, an ideal unification of one's life, but always under a unifying conception of the nature of all existence.¹⁶

From this definition, we can see the major difference between the two orientations: people who are extrinsically

motivated to be active in church generally do so for reasons other than religious, while intrinsically motivated church members are committed for more spiritual reasons. The intrinsically motivated individual is actively seeking a "unification" of his or her life, which would minimize the possibility of that individual holding contradictory beliefs, such as Christianity and racism. On the other hand, the extrinsically motivated person is much more likely to possess such compartmentalization of contradictory beliefs.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Hypotheses

Reiterating some statements made earlier in this paper, sociological studies that have been done on the topic of racism within Christianity reveal that on the whole, church members are more prejudiced than nonmembers. But a significant fault with that basic statement is that it overlooks the wide variation in attitude among church members. Studies show that the relationship between racism and religiosity is curvilinear; that is to say that while the majority of church members are more prejudiced than nonmembers, it has been shown that the most active members' prejudice level was about the same or less than that of nonmembers. The differentiating factor between the two types of church members (intrinsically motivated and extrinsically motivated) was not simply a measure of participation in church, but was primarily an evaluation of individuals' motivation for church activity.

In light of these findings in earlier studies, I propose that while there are certain aspects of organized Christian religion that encourage racial prejudice, members who are intrinsically motivated to belong to a mainstream church and whose understanding of the cognitive beliefs of that body is centered around that basic intrinsic motivation will not be affected by the aspects of organized religion that support prejudice in the sense of becoming or remaining

racially prejudiced because of them. Instead, they more likely will base their racial attitudes on their internalization of the Christian ideal of unconditional love for all humankind. In particular, I propose that 1) if religious commitment is intrinsic, it has a lowering effect on prejudice levels to the point that few or none of intrinsically committed Christians also consciously hold highly racist attitudes; 2) conversely, few extrinsically committed Christians will prove to be minimally racist; 3) at least half of church members will be primarily extrinsic in their religious commitment.

The first two hypotheses are based on conclusions drawn by Gorsuch and Aleshire which support Allport's religiosity differentiation as useful in measuring prejudice levels among church members. The third hypothesis is drawn from my own experiences as a church member and is based on pure personal speculation. I will test these hypotheses using data gathered from an extensive study conducted in 1963 by researchers Glock and Stark. Although this study could be considered outdated, especially in terms of its results in the area of racism, I still find it particularly useful for my purposes in terms of forming my own measurement scales from the researchers' variables, and I believe that information gleaned from this study pertaining to intrinsic/extrinsic motivation for religious commitment can still be helpful today. My use of this study was also

influenced by its accessibility as opposed to newer studies whose raw data were not available to me for secondary analysis.

Methodology for the Statistical Analysis

The analysis I carried out was based on data from The Northern California Church Member Study by Charles Y. Glock and Rodney Stark. Although the basic thrust of the study for these two investigators was anti-Semitism, many variables dealing with racism and religiosity were included. I formed my own racism scale based on Glock and Stark's variables, then cross-tabulated this scale with variables measuring intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity and tested for correlations.

Variables I believe appropriate in measuring intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity are the following chosen from Glock and Stark's study: How often R (respondent) attends Sunday worship services, how many evenings per week R spends in church related activities, how often R's children attend Sunday school or other religious instruction classes, importance of church membership to R, how often R's family says grace, how often R reads the Bible at home, extent to which the Bible helps R in making decisions, how often R prays privately, and whether R thinks "loving thy neighbor" is necessary for salvation. (See Appendix 1 for a complete description of these variables and their responses.) I wanted to form a scale of responses to

these variables, but due to inconsistent organization of the data and limitations of the software I was using (considering the number of cases involved), I was not able to form a scale I considered sufficient for measuring motivation for religious commitment. Instead, I decided to look for a relationship between each individual variable and the racism scale I created.

My racism scale is a continuum categorizing responses to Glock and Stark's variables from highly racist to minimally racist. The variables whose responses were so arranged are as follows: whether the respondent thinks that God meant for the races to be kept separate, blacks are of inferior intelligence, blacks and whites should attend separate churches, blacks are immoral, and blacks don't take care of property; also whether the respondent would move if a black family moved into his/her neighborhood. (See Appendix 2 for a complete explanation of the racism scale.) A respondent's low numeric score on the scale indicates a high level of racism, while a high numeric score indicates a minimally racist attitude.

A related variable that was not included in the racism scale is whether the respondent thinks "love thy neighbor" means to treat all races the same. I considered this variable to be extremely appropriate in the study of the coexistence of Christianity and racism within a person's belief system, and tested for a relationship between it and the religiosity variable that asked whether R thinks "loving thy neighbor" is necessary for salvation.

The final test for relationship between religiosity and racism involved two variables that were expected to be the best indicators of intrinsic/extrinsic commitment and high/low racism. The religiosity variable asked to what extent the Bible helps the respondent in making decisions in daily life. The variable measuring prejudice levels asked whether the respondent thinks that blacks and whites should go to separate churches.

Analysis Results

In cross-tabulations, there was found no evidence of a relationship between any of the religiosity variables and the racism scale. I tested for correlations between the religiosity variables and the racism scale as well. This yielded even less evidence of significant relationships, since correlation coefficients in each case were within hundredths of zero.

As for the test between the two "love thy neighbor" variables (see Appendix 3 for a complete description), most of the respondents indicated agreement with the statement advocating equal treatment of all races regardless of their response to the religiosity variable. Four percent of those who indicated "loving thy neighbor" as necessary for salvation disagreed to some extent with defining "loving thy neighbor" as treating all races the same, which was not a significantly different proportion from those who believed

less strongly in the necessity of "loving thy neighbor." Therefore, no support for my hypotheses was found here.

The test between single religiosity and racism variables (see Appendix 4 for a complete description) yielded the same type of results. No significant variation in attitudes about racial segregation in churches was found whether a person's motivation for religious commitment was intrinsic or extrinsic. In fact, a slightly higher percentage of apparently extrinsically committed than intrinsically committed church members answered in the least racist category.

Implications

My analysis has failed to reject the null hypothesis that intrinsic/extrinsic religious commitment has no bearing upon racial prejudice. Some studies, as noted earlier in the summary of previous research, have yielded similar results. However, my choice of variables was limited to those which fit the technical and statistical requirements of the analysis based on software capabilities and ordering of variable responses. Perhaps formation of religiosity and racism scales with more variables would make the outcome more likely to be closer to the majority of previous studies. Other factors may include the time and geographical location of Glock and Stark's study (from which the variables were extracted), as well as lack of

differentiation between denominational preference, which would predict the degree of conservatism of the respondent.

Since, in this analysis, religiosity appeared to have very little or no influence on racial attitudes, it is possible to cite the secularization of religion as an explanation. Perhaps the doctrines of the church and official church stances concerning racial prejudice have become overshadowed by popular secular opinion that social concern on the part of churchgoers is not affected by religious commitment at all. Perhaps many intrinsically committed church members are in fact committed to America's "civil religion" instead of a body of beliefs not based on a secularized version of Christianity.

CONCLUSION

Through my historical study, I concluded that racial division in the churches of Robeson County was not necessarily, although most of the time was, a product of hostility between races. Through interviews and personal thought, I concluded that although racial division does have functional aspects (survival, cultural preservation, identity, expression, access to leadership development), it is dysfunctional in the ultimate goal of uniting all Christians under the Lordship of Christ and the goal of more peaceful race relations, especially in a volatile situation such as the one in Robeson County. The black minister mentioned early on in this paper criticized the church's silence in such matters and believes that the Church should and can lead in healing the wounds of the past. I note this in my conclusion because I agree and I believe that the Church should be an agent of change for the betterment of society, not an agent of the perpetuation of an unfair and inhumane status quo.

The results of my statistical analysis suggest that the Church may not be making the difference in racial attitudes that it possibly could if it were less influenced by secular factors; in other words, the Church as a whole may be afraid to stand out in contrast to the backdrop of secular society. Thus, its individual members are not

challenged to examine their own attitudes toward other races and to dare to be adamant about equality of treatment for all people, including and especially concerning the acceptance of people of all races into local congregations.

The phenomenon of the coexistence of racism and Christianity within the hearts of America's church members may not appear to be a serious problem to all people from all perspectives. Many people believe that church segregation is in fact the best way for the church to operate, and some even hold a religious belief system which outright teaches the inequality and incompatibility of the races. Some people hold that while segregation of churches is not the best of situations, there is no urgency in changing the way things are. However, I would urge a person in any of these positions to observe the damage caused by racial hostility in our culture.

By no means is the church the only perpetuator of racial prejudice, discrimination, and hostility. The preservation of racial inequality is evident in America's educational system, government, and economic system as well. I hope to point out through presentation of this paper the responsibility of each church member to be more introspective of his or her own attitudes as well as to be more willing to speak out about ways s/he sees the church in direct or indirect support of racial prejudice and to strive to present a consistent Christlike example of love for all

neighbors. Institutions change when individuals become willing to contribute to "changing their little corner of the world." Only then can barriers be torn down and respect and love for all people be instilled in the fiber of our society.

VARIABLES MEASURING INTRINSIC/EXTRINSIC RELIGIOSITY

Variables and possible responses

- * How often do you attend Sunday worship services?
(higher frequency = more intrinsic)
0-Never 1-Every week 2-Nearly every week
3-About 3 times a month 4-About twice a month
5-about once a month 6-about every six weeks
7-about every three months 8-about once/twice a year
9-less than once a year

- * In an average week, how many evenings do you spend in church, including church meetings such as study groups which may not actually meet in the church building?
(higher frequency = more intrinsic)
0-none 1-one 2-two 3-three 4-four 5-five 6-six
7-seven

- * How frequently, if at all, do your children (provided you have them) attend Sunday School or religious instruction classes which are not part of their regular school day?
(higher frequency = more intrinsic)
1-they do not attend 2-they attend regularly
2-they attend often 4-they attend sometimes

- * All in all, how important would you say your church membership is to you?
(more important = more intrinsic)
1-extremely important 2-quite important
3-fairly important 4-not too important
5-fairly unimportant

- * Turning now to other religious activities besides attending church, how often, if at all, are table prayers or grace said before or after meals in your home?
(higher frequency = more intrinsic)
1-at all meals 2-at least once a day
3-at least once a week 4-only on special occasions
5-never or hardly ever

- * How often do you read the Bible at home?
(higher frequency = more intrinsic)
1-practically never 2-once a day or more
3-several times a week 4-once a week
5-quite often, but not regularly 6-once in a while
7-only on very special occasions

A P P E N D I X 1
(continued)

- * Thinking now of your daily life and the decisions that you have to constantly make about how to spend your time, how to act with other people, how to bring up your children, presuming you have them and so on, to what extent does what you have read in the Bible help you in making everyday decisions in your life?

(more help from the Bible = more intrinsic)

- 1-I hardly ever think of the Bible and what it has to say as I go about my daily life
2-While I can't think of specific examples, nevertheless I feel sure that the Bible is still of help in my daily life
3-I can think of specific times when it has helped me in a very direct way in making decisions in life

- * How often do you pray privately?

(higher frequency = more intrinsic)

- 1-never or only at church 2-only on special occasions
3-once in a while, but not regularly
4-quite often, but not regularly 5-once a day or more
6-several times a week 7-once a week

- * Do you think "loving thy neighbor" is necessary for salvation?

(more toward necessary = more intrinsic)

- 1-absolutely necessary 2-would probably help
3-probably has no influence

A P P E N D I X 3

"LOVE THY NEIGHBOR"
 (1 religiosity variable, 1 racism variable)

Cross-tabulation

Is "loving thy neighbor"
 necessary for salvation?

1-absolutely necessary 2-probably would help 3-prob. no influence

"Love thy neighbor" means to treat all races the same.				row totals
1-definitely agree	1438	657	157	2252
% column	88%	79%	85%	85%
2-agree somewhat	133	110	18	261
% column	8.1%	13%	9.8%	10%
3-disagree somewhat	33	40	3	76
% column	2.0%	4.8%	1.6%	2.9%
4-definitely disagree	32	25	6	63
% column	2.0%	3.0%	3.3%	2.4%
column totals	1636	832	184	2652

A P P E N D I X 4

RELIGIOSITY AND ATTITUDES ABOUT CHURCH SEGREGATION

Cross-tabulation

To what extent does the Bible help in making decisions in your daily life?

	1-hardly, if any (extrinsic)	2-it helps, but I can't specifically remember when	3-very specifi- cally (intrinsic)	row totals
Blacks and whites should go to separate churches.				
1-definitely agree	38	123	130	291
% column	8.7%	11%	13%	11%
2-agree somewhat	60	197	185	442
% column	14%	17%	19%	17%
3-disagree somewhat	74	202	169	445
% column	17%	17%	18%	17%
4-definitely disagree	264	649	481	1394
% column	61%	55%	50%	54%
column totals	436	1171	965	2572

NOTES

- ¹ Leroy Fitts: A History of Black Baptists. Quoted in book review by Gregory T. Headen, Advent, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 44-47.
- ² Richard L. Gorsuch and Daniel Aleshire: "Christian Faith and Ethnic Prejudice: A Review and Interpretation of Research." Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 13, 1974, p. 283.
- ³ Keith A. Roberts: Religion in Sociological Perspective. 1984, The Dorsey Press, Homewood, Illinois, p. 343.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 340.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 341.
- ⁶ Ibid., pp. 338-339.
- ⁷ Ibid., pp. 337-338.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 336.
- ⁹ Wayne G. Johnson: "Religion, Racism, and Self-Image: The Significance of Beliefs." Religious Education, September-October, 1973, p. 820.
- ¹⁰ Robert N. Bellah: "Civil Religion in America." Daedalus, vol. 96, pp. 1-21.
- ¹¹ Robert N. Bellah: The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial. 1975, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., pp. 36-40.
- ¹² John B. McConahay and Joseph C. Hough, Jr.: "Symbolic Racism." Journal of Social Issues, vol. 32, no. 2, 1976, p. 36.
- ¹³ Ibid., p. 24.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 23.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 31.
- ¹⁶ Patrick H. McNamara: Religion American Style. 1973, Harper & Row, New York, pp. 303-304.

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