

Race and the Political in 21st Century Evangelical America A Review Essay

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Christopher M. Driscoll, *White Lies: Race and Uncertainty in the Twilight of American Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

Andrew T. Draper, *A Theology of Race and Place: Liberation and Reconciliation in the Works of Jennings and Carter* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

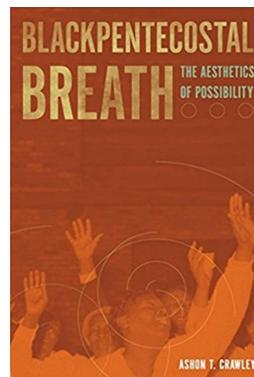
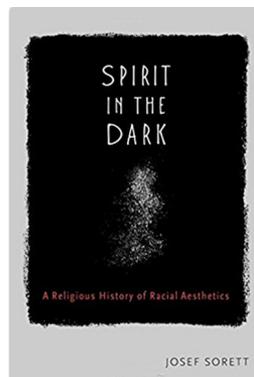
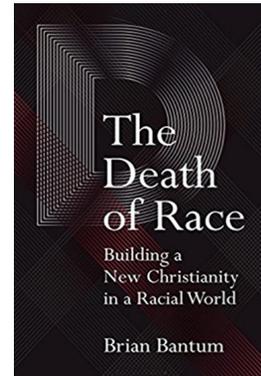
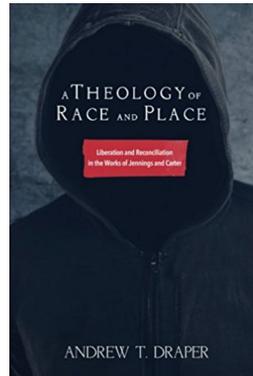
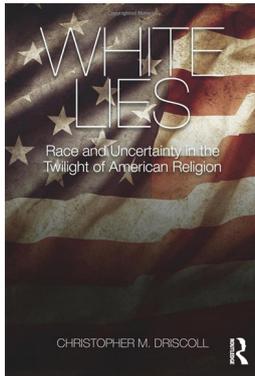
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Josef Sorett, *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

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| whiteness | aesthetics | hybridity | Afropentecostalism |
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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, I published an article that, while hinting in its title the American¹ evangelical movement had entered into a post-racist era, yet urged that much work across racial lines remained to be done.² Little did I realize how much I had understated the problem until I woke up on 9 November 2016 (in Ghana, where I was lecturing at the time) to the realization that Donald J. Trump had become the president elect of the USA. Amidst many and complex reasons for his ascendancy, that four out of five white evangelicals who voted did so for the Republican candidate indicates that the so-called Christian segment of America remains segregated not just on Sunday mornings but also at the polls, not to mention in real life. Elsewhere I have attempted to make further sense of this racial divide in the North American evangelical church from my Asian American Pentecostal location.³ In this essay, however, I want to focus more directly on the black-white chasm in the evangelical world, analyzing its fractures and attempting to discern a way forward.

To accomplish our task, we will engage with five interlocutors, authors of books published in the last year (as of the time of writing). At

one level, the volumes to be discussed cannot be easily shoehorned into any common category – for instance, three, but not all five are revised PhD dissertations (Sorett’s being an extensively further developed argument and Bantum’s being a second book) – and their convergence in what follows might be seen as unjustifiable and arbitrary. At another level, however, read together, an informative narrative can be discerned. Even if the trajectory of this account might be variously delineated, my own assessment is designed to both 1) comprehend better the binary character of black-white racism and racialization in the USA and 2) chart some theologically hopeful and promising, even if politically charged and contested, ways into a more viable future. I will proceed hence to provide brief analytical expositions of each of the five texts in the order that I believe will best accomplish the twofold objective set for our discussion and return in the concluding and final section to evaluate what if any progress has been achieved in the aspired directions.

DRISCOLL⁴ – RECKONING (AMERICAN) RELIGION

We begin with this visiting professor in the Lehigh University department of religion because I have found nothing else as prescient about the rise of the present White House administration, even if the main argument was developed and defended as a Rice

1 *America* in this essay refers to the United States of America, not generally to any North American conglomerate that would include Canada when technically considered and sometimes – even oftentimes – also incorporate Mexico.

2 Yong, “Race and Racialization in a Post-Racist Evangelicalism: A View from Asian America,” in Anthony B. Bradley, ed., *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 45-58 and 216-20.

3 Yong, “American Political Theology in a Post-al Age: A Perpetual Foreigner and Pentecostal Stance,” in Miguel A. De La Torre, ed., *Faith and Resistance in the Age of Trump* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2017), 107-14.

4 Christopher M. Driscoll, *White Lies: Race and Uncertainty in the Twilight of American Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

University PhD thesis in 2014, long before the primary run up to the election. For our purposes, I would urge that potential readers not be distracted by the thread signaled in the book's main title: focusing on that portion of *White Lies* potentially spirals into a kind of psychoanalytical assessment of whiteness in twentieth century America and risks losing the forest for the trees. Grappling with the *how* of white existential anxiety playing out – through the “lies” (or idolatrous god-complexes) that whites propagate against the radical contingencies and uncertainties of history (see subtitle) that threaten their privileged way of life, so argues Driscoll, is less important than understanding *that* certain responses such as lynchings before and white police brutality more recently, among many other documented aggressions (the book opens with discussion of George Zimmerman's July 2013 acquittal of shooting African American Trayvon Martin in February 2012), are defense mechanisms against the sunsetting, or “twilight” (Driscoll's term) of Americanism on the one hand and the intensifying forces of globalization and the looming multicultural order on the other.

What Driscoll desires finally is a willingness on the part of white America, of which he is a member, to acknowledge their own contingency and therefore to be opened up to the possibility of a greater solidarity with black Americans and other peoples of color, the groups whose contributions – or exploitedness, to put it more truthfully – have historically propped up white privilege. His overarching argument can be clearly grasped in an extended passage that deserves to be reproduced here:

Recognizing that what once was a “white” America is on the decline does not equate to saying that things are better for those most victimized by white America. It simply means that whiteness and white America

are witnessing the arthritic fingers, acrid feet, fettered face and hands, the shallow breaths of a civilization facing twilight, but without a historic or hermeneutic precedent for accepting this social decay. For instance, the gutting of the public school system; the shrinking of the middle-class; the loss of privacy; militarization of local and state police agencies. Adequate education, economic stability, privacy, relative safety, though never fully afforded (if at all) to African Americans, are on the decline for whites, as well. Casting white American social life as in decay – that is, American religion in twilight – and the current social arrangement as an expression of the realization of the nothingness it has feared, might lead to greater willingness (among white Americans) to finally address the conditions making such an arrangement possible.⁵

Although much might be contested in the above paragraph when abstracted from the full argument in *White Lies*, the short of it is that rather than continue to promulgate a civil religiosity that underwrites a racialized socio-political history and seeks to fortify or at least not give away completely the privileges attained by white supremacy, white people in the USA need to come to grips with their own mortality in order to be in a better position to forge common cause with others for the greater good.

Even if approached sympathetically, Driscoll's suggestions for how to move ahead, reliant as they are on urging epistemic conversion on the part of his fellow white Americans, might seem unrealistically abstract and overly cognitive and intellectualized. The philosophical, psychological, cultural, and religious studies argumentation here will certainly be foreign to white evangelicals. I am struck, however, by the following aspects of *White Lies*: first, it has named some, even

⁵ Driscoll, *White Lies*, 224-25.

many, of the important elements sustaining the white evangelical vote in the 2016 elections; second, it provides an explicitly religious analysis of whiteness, thus adding depth to an interdisciplinary conversation;⁶ and last but not least, even if Driscoll's own non-religious and a-theological commitments (to the degree these are manifest across the pages of his book)⁷ undercut the credibility or plausibility of his constructive proposals for at least white evangelicals if not most white Christians in this country, they provide historical resources from religious studies perspectives for Christian theologians devoted to engaging matters at this intersection. White voices, even if not confessionally Christian, are crucial to advances in this conversation.

DRAPER⁸ — RECONCILING PLACE

If Driscoll's is a more secular orientation, Andrew Draper is an evangelical theologian (at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana, his alma mater) and pastor (founder of Urban Light Community Church in Muncie, Indiana) who is eminently qualified to engage his white compatriots on race and the political in the present milieu. The "liberation" and "reconciliation" sought for (in the subtitle of Draper's book) underscores the painful realization of deep alienation that

exists in the evangelical and broader ecclesial world on Sunday morning. One potential resolution is the forging of what *A Theology of Race and Place* names as an *ecclesiology of joining*, a reconstitution of the American body of Jesus Christ as inclusive of those across the color spectrum, knitted together by practices of Christian fellowship including particularly that of eating together. Draper suggests that such performative joining requires not just a theology of hospitality accenting the role of hosts – in which case whites or blacks might continue to fight over who is in charge – but that of mutual guest-ing, a mode of joining constituted by mutual vulnerability, but more precisely that in which whites have to recognize their imperial domination of the American ecclesial and political space.

Concomitant with such a performative praxis is a theological conversion willing to confess modern theology, including and perhaps especially its evangelical accounts, is a fundamentally white enterprise. Draper comes to this realization a bit circuitously, albeit unavoidably in his book, given his interlocutors: J. Kameron Carter and Willie Jennings.⁹ Whereas Draper's case unfolds through the analysis of how the former (Carter) seeks to reorient the black theological tradition (which liberative message nevertheless presumes the black-white binary) and to contest the proposals of the Radical Orthodoxy program (in which

6 E.g., George Yancy, ed., *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).

7 Perhaps consistent with the intellectual development of Driscoll's *doktorvater* at Rice, Anthony Pinn, who in the year Driscoll defended his thesis, published *Writing God's Obituary: How a Good Methodist Became a Better Atheist* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2014); see also Anthony B. Pinn, *The End of God-Talk: An African American Humanist Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

8 Andrew T. Draper, *A Theology of Race and Place: Liberation and Reconciliation in the Works of Jennings and Carter* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications, 2016).

9 In particular, Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), and Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010). In 2014, when both Carter and Jennings were still at Duke University (Jennings is now at Yale), I commissioned, as co-editor of *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies*, a set of articles responding to the Carter-Jennings "Duke School" (as I called it) salvo across the theological academy; see the lead essay by Erica Ramirez, "Race and Global Renewal: Mulattic Tongues and Hybridic Imaginations to the Ends of the Earth," *Pneuma: The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 36:3 (2014): 379-85.

retrieval of the main lines of the Christian theological tradition are overwhelmingly European), and how the latter (Jennings) exposes the supersessionist character of the colonial imagination (in its marginalization of indigenous cultures) as well as attempts to temper the colonialist dispositions of contemporary anti-Constantinian theological initiatives, the point both make – and the point that then undergirds Draper’s own critical analysis – is this: that modern Christian theology, even in its feeding of postmodern theological streams, is undeniably white in its theological, anthropological, and political assumptions. Such has never been explicitly named because there has never been a need to do so (just as fish have no need of naming the water in which they swim). The way forward must intentionally work toward what Draper calls, with help from Carter’s poly-glossolalist Pentecost and Jennings’s “christology of joining,”¹⁰ a miscegenist theological and ecclesiological vision, including ecclesial practices that unfold in specific places and spaces around meal tables in ways that don’t privilege white presuppositions and priorities.

In effect, the pill Draper provides will be a hard one to swallow if the 2016 elections are any barometer, precisely because white evangelicals are voting according to their fears (at least that is one way of reading Driscoll) rather than from an informed theological point of view. Yet any chance of evangelical metanoia on this front is better calculated if routed through *A Theology of Race and Place* and its author’s impeccable credentials than through other options currently on offer.¹¹ This is because both

Draper’s ecclesiology of joining is submitted first and foremost as scripturally grounded and then presented in terms of evangelical praxis, opening up thereby its missional character, and because his methodology reflects such joining in action: the capacity to listen to the voices of the non-white other and internalize their claims in more than deconstructive ways. Evangelicals, white and otherwise, who embark on such joining practices will be transformed, and in the process, perhaps reconstitute the people of God and the body of Christ on the one side and realign American politics on the other.

BANTUM¹² – REDEEMING RACE

Brian Bantum appears in part of Draper’s ecclesiology of joining due to the former’s first book: *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity*.¹³ Bantum’s hybridic theology resonates with Jennings’s christology and theology of joining – and hence also intersects with Draper’s construal – not least because *Redeeming Mulatto* was written in part under Jennings’ supervision at Duke University. The son of a white woman and her black husband, Bantum’s efforts then were devoted to comprehending the hybrid character of human and Christian identity in light of the fusion of human and divine in the Christ event. The redemption of racialized humanity, then, involved nothing less than being en-spirited, by the divine breath, into the risen life of the

progressive and mainline Protestant establishment means that her appeal will not find much traction in the white evangelical world.

12 Brian Bantum, *The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016).

13 Brian Bantum, *Redeeming Mulatto: A Theology of Race and Christian Hybridity* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2010); see Draper, *A Theology of Race and Place*, 283-91, for discussion of *Redeeming Mulatto*.

10 See Draper, 89-92 and 214, for discussion and references (to Carter and Jennings).

11 Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), anticipates Draper’s arguments, but her location within the more

incarnated Son of God.

Now, after a few years earning promotion from assistant to associate professorship at Seattle Pacific University, an institution of higher education in the Wesleyan wing of the American evangelical movement, and in light of a two-decade long cross-cultural marriage with a Korean American woman, Bantum has deepened his analysis and extended his prognosis with *The Death of Race*. The death called for is not the so-called colorblind Christianity that might be prevalent in majority white churches and communities; instead, “To say that race must die is to say that we must refuse the lie that we can exist freely while others struggle to be seen as human.... To say that race must die is to refuse the lie that my life with God can be whole while other people’s futures are foreclosed.”¹⁴ In parallel with Driscoll’s *White Lies*, Bantum here speaks to his evangelical community, making appeals to his comrades on their terms, evidenced along three interrelated registers: the personal, the scriptural, and the theological. What I mean is that Bantum’s invitation to herald and enter into the “death of race” proceeds testimonially (according to his own journey of discovering his embodied blackness partly in and through immersion into the Korean American world and its evangelical subculture), biblically (each of the chapters engages extensively with various passages from the canon of scripture), and according to the main lines of the generally received salvation history narrative (the movement from chapter to chapter proceeds from creation through fall to redemption in and through the person and work of Christ). The point is that Bantum’s is a kerygmatic proclamation, calling the evangelical church in particular, not to mention the American ecclesia in general, to concentrate

14 Bantum, *The Death of Race*, 153.

on their constitution in and through colored bodies. Hence the particular lives of “red and yellow, black and white” (to use this colloquialism) are intertwined in the church. “If I am to overcome the death of race, I need to see ... myself truthfully,”¹⁵ that is in the specificity of his history and that of his peoples’, then for the church to overcome its racism, it needs also to account for its members and their various stories – testimonies – truthfully.

Such ecclesial truthfulness, *The Death of Race* suggests, can potentially reconstitute the racially divided polis, even the cosmopolis that is the USA. Bantum is not proposing a political theology, but his “new Christianity” is an ecclesiological vision, not unlike Draper’s, that has political implications, not to say consequences. There is no getting away from race, certainly not from the ethnic and racial dimensions of our biologies, but the call is to confront and negate the sin of racism that stains our personal identities, that estranges us from one another in our churches, and that mars the body politic whether in local communities or at the state or national levels of engagement. Is a kind of Christian re-racialization possible, one that lives into and out of the healing story of Jesus the messiah whose life and death promised to erase the enmity between Jew and Greek to begin with?

SORETT¹⁶ — RETRIEVING HISTORY

If Draper’s ecclesiology of joining and Bantum’s death of race both invite if not demand consideration of the specificities and particularities of other lives and bodies,

15 Bantum, *The Death of Race*, 139.

16 Josef Sorett, *Spirit in the Dark: A Religious History of Racial Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

how might white Americans, and even Asian Americans like me,¹⁷ attune ourselves to the witness borne by the black church and the black citizens of this nation? While there are any number of even recent accounts of the black church and its theological and other fortunes,¹⁸ I turn here instead to the work of the religious historian and African American studies scholar Josef Sorett in smaller part because he builds a bridge to the next (and final) book to be reviewed but in larger part because his focus on the African American literary tradition from the 1920s through the 1960s provides a window into black religious responses to white domination, especially from across the Afro-Protestant tradition. Currently an associate professor of religion and African-American Studies at Columbia University, and director of its Center on African-American Religion, Sexual Politics and Social Justice, this author's *Spirit in the Dark* captures the religious dimensions of black protest literature, urging that rather than being marginal to such efforts, spiritual and even theological impulses have consistently, even if not without contestation, invigorated the black literary endeavor.

Sorett's point is that, despite the pressures exerted toward the secularization of the African American literary tradition, especially given the dependence of black upward social mobility on assimilation to white cultural fashions and norms, there is a fundamental religious dimension that can nevertheless be detected across the half century of analysis. For instance,

17 For more on Asian American racialization into whiteness, its problems and possible venues of mutual liberation, see Yong, "Asian American Historicity: The Problem and Promise of Evangelical Theology," *SANACS Journal [Society of Asian North American Christian Studies Journal]* 4 (2012-2013): 29-48.

18 Including but not limited to Walter Earl Fluker, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

the Negro Renaissance and the Black Arts movements through the 1940s were antedated and suffused by and with the ancestral spirits of slave, Caribbean, and Afro-diaspora religiosity (think for example of Nora Neale Hurston); the efforts to universalize the black experience at mid-century could not escape the aesthetics of the Afro-Protestant tradition (e.g., James Baldwin and Richard Wright); and the transnational and political ferment of the 1960s was empowered as much by the prophetism of the black church – male and female – as it was by the emergence of nationalist Islam and other African-derived traditions (think Alice Walker and Ralph Ellison among others). In these and other ways, Sorett documents the interwovenness of religion and race in African American aesthetics, not only in its musicality but especially in its literary production. *Spirit in the Dark*, taken from Aretha Franklin's so-named record in 1970, reflects on black spirituality outside the church, just as Franklin herself "crossed-over" from the sacred to the secular realm without ever really leaving the former behind.

In effect, Sorett documents across five decades of African American literature the cries for liberation that have rung out since the Middle Passage. To be sure, some will counter-argue that the emergence of the black middle class since the Civil Rights movement suggests that racist impediments have been overcome. Yet if Bantum is correct, then, the story of black lives told by Sorett continue to be written across black bodies, alive and dead!¹⁹ More problematic is that we are currently oblivious to black-white segregation since such is no longer

19 That is why African American theology cannot yet be fully whitened, or domesticated according to the white evangelical frame; see, e.g., Amos Yong and Lewis Brogdon, "The Decline of African American Theology? A Critical Response to Thabiti Anyabwile," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 4:2 (2010): 129-44.

legally mandated and we presume things are how they are because we – whites, blacks, and everyone in between – have chosen to affiliate ourselves in such a color-coordinated (or more accurately: color-segregated!) way. *Spirit in the Dark* is an open invitation, to whites who might not fear such introduction, to examine the religious depth of black voices, lives, and experiences, as mediated through slices of its literary traditions. Written (or printed) between the lines of these pages are the spirits of black histories – ancestral, international, African diaspora, even Catholic spirits – that have animated and continue to animate black lives and their witnesses.

CRAWLEY²⁰ — REVITALIZING BREATH

If Soret's exploration of black literature unfolds how the quest for black literary aesthetic could not free itself from the spirituality and religiosity of the black church, then Ashon Crawley confronts the politics of respectability head on, propounding instead against the theological-and-political establishment an *atheological-and-apolitical* black consciousness along a sonic register. Opposing here the intellectualized abstractions of European and colonial categorical discursivity that has perpetuated distinctions – of race, gender, class, sexuality, etc. – privileging white lives, Crawley presses deep into the soundscape of blackpentecostal religiosity, one he enters from the pentecostal site of his Church of God in Christ background but that he insists is irreducible to its modern pentecostal manifestations and expressions, in order to formulate an enfleshed mode

of thinking and doing otherwise than that sanctioned by the white academy. Crawley agrees here with Jennings and Carter (and by extension Draper) that “to think theologically, to think philosophically, is to think racially,”²¹ but his response is to think blackpentecostally on its own terms rather than as beholden to the categorical rationality of the intellectual status quo.

So in contrast to Bantum's more scriptural and theological approach, Crawley's is an enfleshed inquiry privileging the breathing, shouting, noise-producing, and tongue-speaking (the four main chapters of his book) expressions of blackpentecostal life. Blackpentecostal preaching, praying, and dancing are ritual subversions of Jim Crow lynching; the shouting, whooping, and gesticulations of the Great Awakenings and the Azusa Street revival involve the amplification (later on through the Hammand B3 organ, for instance, discussed in *Blackpentecostal Breath's* epilogue) rather than reduction of sound that is characteristic of allegedly cultured white religiosity; the testifying, crying, and tarrying – including the moaning and groaning – at the blackpentecostal service and altar are a refusal of the embarrassment demanded by white respectability; and the intensification of blackpentecostal *glossolalia* (presumed heavenly languages) are a rejection of the normativity of *xenolalia* (presumably actual languages the speaker attains without learning) and the presumptiveness of assimilation to white linguistic conventions, insisting instead on sectarian resistance to the status quo. For the blackpentecostal, “being spirit filled breaks down the distinction, the categorical

20 Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (The Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2017).

21 Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 12; Jennings is cited in Crawley's text (albeit in relationship to another point), but Carter is not, unless I missed it.

coherence of human and machine....”²² But blackpentecostal breathing not only explodes the human-machine contrast, but also the categorical structuring of other binaries: materiality and spirituality, rationality and irrationality, and (white) humanity and (black) inhumanity. It is possible to think otherwise, but only if one is willing to set aside the intellectual performativity of white cognition and rationalization and descend down the windpipe, into the enfleshed gut, of black life and religiosity.

Those who are familiar with my earlier work on black Pentecostalism and on pentecostal aurality and sonicity will no doubt surely recognize that this review essay culminates with *Blackpentecostal Breath* least because it is the most recently published of the books under review (although that is convenient) but because Crawley seeks to forge an alternative theological-philosophical platform from out of the breathing and living of colored lives historically marginalized on the underside of the European enlightenment and its colonial extensions.²³ The aesthetics of possibility breathed out across these pages are exhaled from out of the experiential site of this (former?) choir director, musician, and preacher, not to mention preacher’s kid, who refuses to compartmentalize these activities on the outside of the theological-and-philosophical sphere, and insists instead on excavating their

22 Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath*, 255.

23 I discuss the sonic dimension of pentecostal spirituality in my, “Proclamation and the Third Article: Toward a Pneumatology of Preaching,” in Myk Habets, ed., *Third Article Theology: A Pneumatological Dogmatics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 367-94, and engage with black pentecostal spirituality and theology in, “Justice Deprived, Justice Demanded: Afropentecostals and the Task of World Pentecostal Theology Today,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 15:1 (2006): 127-47; for more on the latter, see also Estrela Alexander and Amos Yong, eds., *Afro-Pentecostalism: Black Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in History and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

theological-and-philosophical implications and applications even if such interventions might mean the end of theology and philosophy as we know it. In the end, black American Eric Garner’s “I can’t breathe!” – caught on video in July of 2014 as Garner expired under the excesses of white police violence – introduces themes of a book long before in the making (the Duke dissertation version was defended in 2013), but now catapulting onto center stage the potency of what it means to think through breaths of resistance and of noise in a racialized world.

CONCLUSIONS AND TRANSITIONS

Ending with Crawley hints that the answer to the “race question” in the twenty-first century involves a turn to Pentecostalism, perhaps even more precisely to black Pentecostalism. That might be seen instead as a perpetuation of the problem, if such were understood according to the terms of the 2016 elections with which this essay began. Revisiting the horizons of our thinking from Driscoll through to Crawley, however, invites another set of questions and consideration: is whiteness redeemable and if so what role do blacks play?

If whiteness names the systems and structures of Euro-American exploitation of people of color for the advancement of western civilization, then such must be judged as contrary to the gospel of Jesus Christ who comes for all flesh, Jew and Greek, with every shade in between. But if whiteness names the historicity of complicity that we all find ourselves caught in – white or black, yellow or brown²⁴ – then

24 White Europeans are certainly not uniquely ethnocentric so that any honest discussion of race will

the redemption of whiteness can only happen with the redemption of all: the establishment of righteousness, the reparation of injustices, the repentance from collusion (across color lines), and the establishment of shalom and just reconciliation. This means neither that *only* “black lives matter,” nor that “all lives matter” in any unqualified sense at this moment in our history. It does mean that those committed to the historicity of Jesus’ incarnation and the Spirit’s pentecostal outpouring on all flesh ought to be committed to discerning the specificities of concrete times and the particularities of living spaces within which human breathing and enfleshment unfolds, and to attend to the violence destroying human creatures at those sites.

My own Asian American pentecostal perspectives thus prioritizes discernment at least along the following three lines, here enumerated in existential rather than logical order. First, to the degree that people of color remain those most vulnerable to the violence of the present global system and its structures, including those instantiated here in America, to that same degree we ought to foreground and work to repair the brokenness of a world that alienates and destroys human life; for this task, in the American landscape, hearkening to black voices – theological (Bantum), literary (Sorett), or transdisciplinary (Crawley) – is essential in order to listen to the extant challenges and discern possible opportunities to chart for futures otherwise not named. Second, the 2016 election indicates that white-black relations are being further polarized by pain and anguish perceived if not also felt on both sides rather

inevitably have to deal with how people across the global cultural landscape are all guilty of racism variously, and thus need to be engaged with these issues; for further discussion, see Love Sechrest, Amos Yong, and Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, eds., *Race, Theology, and Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018).

than being reconciled, and that the evangelical church is not in much of a position at all to facilitate dialogical solidarity; toward this end, we need all the help we can get, not only theoretically (e.g., the Driscolls of this world) but more importantly performatively, so that we can think further and more productively about what it means to be hosts and guests of each other first, before we even try to develop grand schemes of re-racialization. Last but not least, as an Asian American, I have to ask myself how our peculiar site involves its own racialized dynamics, how these play out vis-à-vis others across the race spectrum, and what these mean in relationship to the good news of the coming reign of God; for such a task, my colleagues and I have to be triply conversant: with the angst of whites, with the pain of blacks, and with our own confusion as stereotypical “model minorities” and “perpetual foreigners,” each with its own specific seductions and traps.²⁵ In the end, we each need the other since we cannot work toward a more just world on our own.²⁶ If the problem seems too great so as to immobilize any one of us, perhaps this ought to be taken as an indicator that the divine breath which gives life to human creatures is calling out to us through the voices of others, and if so, then may those who have ears be able to respond appropriately.²⁷

25 And here I have not factored in the Latino/a perspective and reality, into which I have married (my wife is a fifth generation Mexican American); I must return to this interface at another time.

26 See also here the concluding chapter of my book, *The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), where I urge how evangelical theology needs not only Asian American voices but those of other peoples of color in a globalizing world.

27 Thanks to my graduate assistant, Hoon Jung, for proofreading this essay; any errors of fact or interpretation remain my own.

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