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**When Racial Profiling Becomes an Abuse of Power:
A Hermeneutical Reading of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29.**

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Premise

This essay analyzes the sociohistorical context and setting narrated in the canonical episode of Paul’s arrest and his treatment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29) as a fundamental platform from which to present a hermeneutical and theological interpretation of the liabilities and ultimate consequences of racial profiling, especially when it is exercised by civil authorities. Following the hermeneutical principles of Hans-Georg Gadamer and a pragmatic analysis, it is essential to establish a dialogical or circular relationship between the message conveyed by this biblical text and the human experience found within the Black and Brown communities of the United States. Personal experiences become the keys to interpreting the anthropological reality of the biblical author, who tries to describe the human experience of racial profiling that has become a universal behavior pattern. This pragmatic reality of profiling and discrimination comes alive among the existential circumstances of racial-ethnic minorities, making the biblical texts significant and reflective mirrors for interpretation and meaning.¹ Consequently, these biblical episodes embody a paradigm of the racial profiling that has been the reality of the marginalized communities in the United States, leading to the incarceration of a large number of African Americans and Latin@s. Accordingly, this essay will present a

¹ See Paul Regan, “Hans-Georg Gadamer’s Philosophical Hermeneutics: Concepts of Reading, Understanding and Interpretation,” *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy* 4, no. 2 (2012): 286-287 and Massimo Grilli, Maurizio Guidi, and Elzbieta Obara, *Comunicación y pragmática en la exégesis bíblica* (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2018), 25.37.

theological biblical analysis with a distinct focus on the ethnic perspectives of Black and Brown communities as living *loci theologici* through which the biblical text comes alive.

The development of the aforementioned theme is articulated in three sections according to the methodological path of narrative criticism, sociological biblical approach, and practical theology: 1) The *Sitz im Leben* and theological themes implied in the canonical text of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29; 2) the biblical paradigm of racial profiling manifested in the official legal/judicial exercise of power toward African Americans and Latin@s at the street level; and 3) racial profiling and the Lukan notion of Christianity: a proposal of healing to our American communities.

The *Sitz im Leben* and Theological Themes Implied in the Canonical Text of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29

The episode starts in Acts 21:27 and finishes in Acts 22:29, since Acts 22:30 shows a drastic change of chronological (Τῆ δὲ ἐπαύριον) and spatial (τὸ συνέδριον, καὶ καταγαγὼν τὸν Παῦλον ἔστησεν εἰς αὐτούς) settings in reference to the previous episode.²

Following the criteria of narrative criticism, suitable to the nature of the literary material presented in Acts 21:27–22:29, one may distinguish the following subsections of the episode showing its literary structure:³

A. First Part: Narrative section: violence and arrest of Paul

² Frederick F. Bruce also proposes the end of the pericope in Acts 22:29, indicating that Acts 22:30 implies a different section in the narrative that opens to the self-defense of Paul developed in Acts 23. However, Bruce does not mention the criteria of the changes of place and time manifested in the narrative of the events. F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 422-423.

³ See John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis: A Beginner's Handbook*, 3rd ed. (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 95-96.

a) Riot in the Temple: Acts 21:27-30⁴

b) Arrest of Paul: Acts 21:31-40

B. Second Part: Speech of Paul: Acts 22:1-21

C. Third Part: Narrative section: violence and arrest of Paul

a) Violence of the Jewish community: Acts 22:22-23

b) Paul under the Roman authority: Acts 22:24-29

According to the stylistic and dramatic criteria manifested in the narrative analysis of the pericope, it is possible to accept this concentric structure, in which the central part corresponds to the main stylistic change that goes from the voice of the narrator to the voice of the protagonist of the story.⁵ Paul's defense speech portrays the characteristic of an intradiegetic story of his conversion combined with his understanding of the Jewish history of salvation reaching its summit in the event of Christ.⁶ The main theological themes and Greco-Roman style of the kerygmatic proclamation of Paul in this particular episode are undoubtedly a rich source of academic studies and rhetorical analysis. However, the focus of the present study is centered on the diegetic framework (A and A') in which the narrator describes the settings and the main

⁴ The Temple is the spatial and religious setting around which the events of the riot and the arrest of Paul take place. See Darrell Block, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 651 and Bruce, *Acts*, 408-409.

⁵ See Jean Louis Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us": Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, Subsidia Biblica (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 43-44 and Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 57-58.

⁶ Ska, *"Our Fathers Have Told Us,"* 47-49 and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, 1980), 229.

events portraying the cause and circumstances of the hostile attitude taken towards the protagonist and the role of the Roman authority of the time.⁷

From the narrative sections A and A', the reader can observe fundamental elements that exemplify a case of profiling, judgment, and subjective condemnation of a person before the accused individual or victim can have an opportunity to face a fair trial. That sequence is substantiated by the brief analysis of the social settings, vocabulary, and succession of actions manifested in the diegetic context shown in A and A'.

Social Settings Manifested in the First and Third Part of the Pericope

The narrative analysis of the diegetic framework of A and A' indicates a setting that functions as the "temporal and spatial setting" or background stage upon which the main actions take place.⁸ However, it is essential to discover in the pericope other settings that may not be so obvious but are nevertheless significant in the analysis of the *Sitz im Leben* of the events. I am referring specifically to two social settings manifested in the diegetic framework, presented to the readers as the first narrative level.⁹ These social settings become the door of the world behind the text and invite the reader to enter and understand the complexity and functionality of the political institutions, social status, economic systems, social customs, and general cultural elements of the time. The social setting offers valuable hermeneutical tools for the pragmatic

⁷ See Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *Per leggere i racconti biblici* (Rome: Borla, 2001), 88-89.

⁸ See James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 87; Marguerat and Bourquin, *Racconti biblici*, 86-87; Mark A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 70; and David Rhoads and Donald Mitchie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 63.

⁹ The Lukan author presents the events from a zero point of view, allowing the readers to infer the motives and the dispositions of the *forum internum* of the characters. See Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 127 and Marguerat and Bourquin, *Racconti biblici*, 41-43. 75.

application of specific biblical notions to modern problematic situations. The life setting of a biblical pericope can become the foundational hermeneutical apparatus to elucidate and judge actual situations of life that may reflect behavioral paradigms that could also cause the disruption of harmony in modern U.S. society.¹⁰

Judaism is the first social setting identified in the pericope. The notion of Judaism is not just a simplistic understanding of a religious system, but also a category that implies ethnicity, culture, and *Weltanschauung* in which politics, business, finances, family—every single dimension of Jewish life—is understood from the essential parameters established in the Tanakh. Even though Judaism is inserted into a predominately Greco-Roman culture during this time, Jewish identity keeps unto itself, as a distinctive entity of race, culture, and religion that cannot be separated from one another.¹¹ Consequently, Judaism develops into a hostile social setting through which it deems Christianity to be a heretical movement attempting to destroy the truth of the revelation of God. These intrinsic dimensions of Judaism explain why some Jews from Asia (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι, Acts 21:27) initiate the riot against Paul.¹² The voice of the narrator explicitly indicates at least two motivations of the hostile attitude: the problem of religion, since they say Paul proclaims a heretical message regarding the Israelite faith (Acts 21:28), and the problem of ethnicity, since the accusers say Paul is bringing some *goyim* (Gentiles) into the

¹⁰ See Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 87-88 and Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 74-75.

¹¹ See Mauro Pesce, *Da Gesù al cristianesimo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2011), 145-146 and Denise K. Buell and Caroline J. Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 123, no. 2 (2004): 240.

¹² At this point of the Lukan narrative of Acts, the hostility of the Jews comes to a climax. The Jewish agitation against Paul is a constant in the life of the hero as it can be perceived in Acts 13:50; 14:2.5.19; 17:5-9; and 18:12-17. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 696.

sacred Temple (Acts 21:28-29). The social setting of the Jews exposes a double discrimination towards Paul based on ethnicity and religion; the same two elements speak loudly to the life experiences of minorities in United States today.

The Roman authority of the soldiers reveals the second social setting. The Roman figures embody the Greco-Roman world of the Gentiles, also a self-standing complex category that simultaneously implies ethnicity, religion, and a very distinct world view of its own. The reader perceives that Greco-Roman soldiers are Gentiles who do not belong to the Jewish ethnicity, who speak a different language, and who have a very different belief system, commonly called paganism, that is not compatible with the Jewish or the Christian point of view. It is important to clarify that Greco-Roman culture tolerated different cultural and religious practices, sometimes even assimilating them. However, it maintained its own essential characteristics that explicitly indicate they belong to a different and self-standing culture, ethnicity, and religion.¹³ Moreover, in this setting, the Greco-Roman culture has not yet explicitly gone against Christianity as a religion, as it will beginning in the year 64 CE with the Emperor Nero. However, the attitude of the Roman soldiers was equally hostile towards the person of Paul in Acts 21:30-36 and 22:24-25.

The soldiers certainly intervene in the middle of the riot against Paul, but without the benefit of doubt they arrest a person who has been abused by the crowd. Even after Paul's speech, the Roman authority proceeds to physical punishment, assuming the guilt of someone who, even after defending himself, was never given the right to face trial. This common Roman practice is disrupted, however, by the fear of consequential punishment once Paul's Roman

¹³ See Pesce, *Da Gesù al cristianesimo*, 146-147 and Buell and Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation," 240.

citizenship is revealed. Social status and citizenship suddenly give weight to the integrity and basic human and civil rights of the victim, rights that otherwise would have been disregarded and annihilated by the assumptions and generalizations of those in a position of authority and power.

According to the social settings previously described, I will now present the behavioral paradigm of these patterns inferred from the respective attitudes and mindsets of the Jews and the Roman soldiers manifested in the narrative.

Assumption, Judgment, and Condemnation by the Jews

The Jews from Asia, on the seventh day of Paul's ritual purification, see him in the Temple and make claims against him. The charges against Paul, according to his accusers, are basically two:

1) Paul's teachings are heretical and therefore against the Torah, the Temple, and the people of Israel.

2) Paul has brought Greek Gentiles into the Temple area, defiling the sacred place. The term used to indicate the defiling of the Temple is the verb κοινώω¹⁴ in the indicative perfect tense (κεκοίνωκεν), emphasizing that the action performed in the past continues to carry on its consequences into the present day of the speakers.¹⁵ The judgment and condemnation in this case happen almost simultaneously. It is the attitude and approach that deny the accused person all the

¹⁴ The most common translations of this verb in English would be "to violate ritual holiness, to make something unclean, to defile, to profane, to desecrate, to pollute, to make something unacceptable." See Friederich Hauck, "κοινώω," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* III (hereafter TDNT), 809; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick William Danker, *Biblical Greek Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001) (hereafter BAGD), "κοινώω," 438.

¹⁵ See F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. Robert W. Funk, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) (hereafter Blass-Debrunner), § 342.4.

basic civil and human rights of partaking in a fair trial, that ironically, are also required and established in the Torah (see Dt 19:16-21).¹⁶

The author of Acts uses the verb νομίζω¹⁷ in the imperfect tense (ἐνόμιζον in Acts 21:29), indicating a permanent attitude that remains as a constant mindset in time, namely, that the Jews, Paul's accusers, are not willing to change their mind with respect to this assumption, which does not correspond to reality or factual deeds. In other words, the accusation and simultaneous condemnation of the victim are based not on actual facts but on the supposition (νομίζω) that the person has committed a grave crime, without any consideration given to the remote possibility of the innocence of the accused.

After determining the “assumption or presupposition” (νομίζω) based on hate and conspiracy, one can see that the hypothetical thinking becomes, almost immediately, the clear-cut “judgment” and “condemnation” of the victim. The narrator in Acts 21:27 indicates that after observing Paul in the Temple (not mentioning anybody else, i.e., the implication is that Paul is alone) the Jews begin to incite the people by using tactics to create confusion (συνέχεον). I use the expression “creating confusion” purposely because it is the semantic level that is properly implied in the verb συγγέω, which also means “to stir up, to confuse, to mix, or to cause

¹⁶ Jewish law prescribes that the false witness and the accused person must appear in front of judges and priests and a thorough process of investigating should take place in order to verify the truth of the accusations. See Dt 19:16-21 in Makkot 5b; Maimonides, *Mishne Torah, Hilkhoh Sanhedrin* 12, 4, Sanhedrin 46b; Julius Stone, *Human Law and Human Justice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 22-23, especially n. 61.

¹⁷ The verb νομίζω usually is translated in the active voice as “to suppose,” “to think,” “to presume,” or “to assume.” See James Moulton and George Milligan, “νομίζω,” in *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 428.

dismay.”¹⁸ The proceedings of the accusers who try to confuse and stir up the Jewish population become the most negative actions that one can assume to see in a trial. Usually the accusations, if they are true, must be clear according to the truth and context of the deeds committed. The accusation and judgment here are permeated by a constant confusion that promotes violence towards the victim as it is demonstrated by the precise use of the verbal tense in the active imperfect (συνέχεον).¹⁹

This steady confusion, fueled by the hate of the accusers, produces physical violence against the victim. The condemnation is manifested physically as an immediate reaction. This means that the physical action is a direct result of a mental condemnation that has already taken place conjointly with the accusation. The expression of ἐπέβαλον ἐπ’ αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας (Act 21:27) can be literally translated as “they threw (their) hands upon him,” an expression that indicates the immediate reaction that was accompanied by force, which makes sense if the people are emotionally aroused or shaken (ἐκινήθη, Acts 21:30)²⁰ by the assumptions being made. The same emotional participation is demonstrated at the end of Paul’s defense speech, when the Jewish audience reacts in rage after the kerygmatic proclamation of Paul and his inclusion of the Gentiles (*goyim*) in the divine plan of salvation. The rage seen here is based on the charges of religion and race. The reactive cry of the furious crowd states, “take this from the

¹⁸ The verb συγχέω implies the following semantic connotations: “to pour together, to confuse, to create consternation, to confound, to trouble, to stir up.” See in Moulton and Milligan, *Vocabulary*, “σύγχυσις, συγχέω,” 595 and in BAGD, “συγχέω,” 775.

¹⁹ See Blass-Debrunner, 325, 327.

²⁰ The verb ἐκινήθη is in indicative aorist passive, presenting the 3rd person singular of the verb κινέω. The passive can be translated as “to be moved,” “to excite,” “to create a riot or disturbance,” “to throw into commotion.” See BAGD, “κινέω,” 432.

earth because he is not fit to live” (Αἶρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον· οὐ γὰρ καθῆκεν αὐτὸν ζῆν, Acts 22:22).

A strong statement such as this does not allow space for a change of mind. Here I would like to underline the condemnation that implies the elimination of life. In other words, anyone who proclaims a different message or thinks in a different way does not have a chance of being accepted by this community, and as a consequence the person or victim, in this case Paul, needs to be eliminated. It is as if the victim is some type of disease that needs to be eradicated just because (in the case of Paul) of his inclusion of others who are not from the same race as the accusers but are equally important in God’s plan of salvation. The use of the verb καθήκω in the imperfect tense (καθῆκεν in Acts 22:22) indicates that while the victim is still alive that person continues to be unworthy of living or existing in the eyes of the accusers, i.e., that Paul ought not to live.²¹ Such a scandalous attitude demonstrates the pattern of hate and discrimination that is associated with a culture of death.

The behavior of the Jewish crowd is described by the Lukan author through Greek verbs in the imperfect tense. This verbal modality reveals a constant and permanent hostile attitude of the anonymous crowd towards the victim, and analogically these attitudes reflect the constant attitude of racism and racial profiling that have been permeating U.S. culture since the time of the framers. This discriminatory mindset of racism and profiling has become a part of the social DNA of many in the contemporary United States, and the “American anonymous crowd” preserves and reflects similar assumptions, judgments, and condemnations towards the “other”

²¹ The verb καθῆκεν is the indicative imperfect active in the 3rd person singular of the verb καθήκω. Among the diverse meanings of this verb, the semantic connotation implied in Acts 22:22 is “to become, to be fit, to be proper or fitting.” See BAGD, “καθήκω,” 389 and Bock, *Acts*, 663. For the verbal modality see Blass-Debrunner, 325, 327.

who is ethnically different. In direct opposition to this behavioral pattern, the Lukan message of Christianity embodied in Paul denotes that God's plan of salvation includes the unique multifaceted and dissimilar dimensions of each person, applying a divine design that does not require membership in a specific ethnicity.

Assumption, Judgment, and Condemnation by the Roman Authority

Bruce qualifies the intervention of the Roman authority as a rescuing act in favor of Paul. I respectfully disagree with his opinion on this qualification. It is obvious that the soldiers who stayed at the Antonia Fortress timely intervene in the midst of the violent riot, but their intention is not to save Paul, the victim.²² Their primary goal is to put an end to the violence that is attempting to destroy their control of the situation. The narrator explicitly indicates that the violent Jews stop beating Paul the moment they see the Roman soldiers (Acts 21:32). The determined and rapid intervention of a large contingent of soldiers²³ is a good deterrent for the Jews, reminding them that the ultimate human power is still the Roman authority. Therefore, the stopping of the physical aggression towards Paul was motivated by the aggressors' fear of the ruling power of the time. It is important to see that of all those who are enacting violence, the one who is taken into custody and put in chains is precisely the victim. Why do the soldiers not arrest the other violent people who are stirring up the problems? The actions of the Roman representatives disclose that they assume the culpability of the targeted victim. Their assumption presupposes a judgment and condemnation even before any investigation is conducted while meeting their goal of returned calm.

²² Important details concerning the location and the characteristics of the Antonia Fortress are given by Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.238-245.

²³ See Bock, *Acts*, 652.

The emphatic expressions used to characterize Paul's incarceration in Acts 21:33 is significant. The author uses two verbs to indicate the "excessive use of power" toward a person who is beaten by a crowd. The first action is performed by the tribune (ὁ χιλιάρχος) who takes hold of Paul with hostile intent or manner, semantic levels implied in the verb ἐπελάβετο.²⁴ To this action is added the order to bind the prisoner with two chains (δεθῆναι ἀλύσει δυσί). The most striking note of this behavior is that it is applied to the only person in the episode who has not been aggressive, while the abusive and arbitrary use of power, common among the Roman soldiers, mirrors their lack of care about due process in the cases involving non-Roman citizens.

It is crucial to highlight the excessive use of power in both cases, the Jews and the Romans, making the latter distinctive in the sense that the Roman authority represents the maximum law in the territory, guaranteeing the assurance of peace and harmony, while the Jews claim Paul was the deterrent to their own peace and harmony.

The assumption of a crime that implies a judgment and a condemnation becomes explicit when Paul speaks in Greek to the Roman soldier, who replies to Paul, "Are you not the Egyptian (ὁ Αἰγύπτιος) who started the recent revolt and led those four thousand cut-throats out into the desert?" (Acts 21:38, NJB). This jumping to conclusions is the essential attitude of profiling that implies judgment and condemnation of an innocent person. The Greek formulation of the question is crucial for this interpretation. The Roman soldier asks: οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος . . . (Acts 21:38), beginning his question with the adverb οὐκ that expects a positive answer,

²⁴ The verb ἐπελάβετο is the indicative aorist of the middle voice in the 3rd person singular of the verb ἐπιλαμβάνω or ἐπιλαμβάνομαι, which can be translated as "to take, to lay hold of, to take possession of, to overtake, to attain to, or to seize upon anything with hands." See BAGD, "ἐπιλαμβάνομαι," 295.

especially if οὐκ is combined with the inferential particle ἄρα.²⁵ The arrest is made on the assumption that Paul is the Egyptian rebel, an enemy of the Roman authority who has abandoned four thousand men in the desert while running away to save his own skin.²⁶ The violence of the crowd and probably the physical appearance of Paul, even though these indicators are not mentioned in the text, are part of the criteria used by the Roman authority to arrest a person.

After being granted the right to speak, Paul addresses the Jewish crowd in Aramaic, but his *apologia* ends in a violent reaction of the crowd, which consequently reinforces the behavioral pattern of the Roman authority. The commander and the Roman soldiers cannot understand Paul's speech because of the language barrier, but because of the reaction of the crowd, they continue to exercise their power by sending Paul to the barracks with a brutal process of interrogation that implies physical flogging (Acts 22:24). The same pattern of abusive power is manifested to an increasing degree.

The commander orders μάστιξιν ἀνετάξεσθαι αὐτὸν (Act 22:24), which is a thorough examination or interrogatory by using μάστιξ, namely, a whip, lash, or scourge; this implies physical aggression and torture. The μάστιξιν or *flagrum* consisted of a wooden handle with leather strips to which were tied pieces of metal and bones.²⁷ This practice of beating was commonly applied to noncitizens or slaves and such brutality was quite normal among the Roman soldiers. They would not presume that a person presenting Paul's characteristics, namely, an Aramaic speaker with a physical appearance easily confused with an Egyptian, a non-Roman,

²⁵ See Blass-Debrunner, § 440.2 and Bock, *Acts*, 657.

²⁶ Josephus describes the particulars of the rebellion led by the Egyptian mentioned in Acts 21:38. See Flavius Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.13.5 § 261-263 and Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* 20.8.6 §169-172. See also Bock, *Acts*, 657; Bruce, *Acts*, 412; and Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 700.

²⁷ Cf. BAGD, “μάστιξ,” 495.

or a “criminal” could be in fact a Roman citizen from birth. Perhaps this might have been avoided if the Roman tribune could understand Paul’s defense speech, but the language and cultural barriers help the reader to better understand the unnecessary conflicts born out of division, cultural ignorance and the non-acceptance of other cultures.

The moment of the anagnorisis²⁸ comes in Acts 22:25 when Paul reveals to the Tribune his Roman citizenship, which legally exempts him from the brutality of the flagellation according to the Valerian and Porcian laws.²⁹ Roman citizenship is the only argument in the narrative that guarantees a basic right to a fair trial and to the physical integrity of Paul’s person. The legal status of Paul becomes the only protection against the abuse of authority since the Roman representatives are equally subject to the *lex romana*. The succeeding verses and episodes will be determined by the rights implied in Paul’s Roman citizenship, especially his future trip to Rome, since any Roman citizen has the right to appeal to Caesar (*provocatio* in Acts 25:11).³⁰

Hermeneutical Behavioral Pattern

As a précis, the behavioral pattern from the social settings mentioned above offers nine semantic communicative lines that surface after the brief semantic and narrative analysis of the pericope according to the behavioral patterns expressed in the Jewish and Roman social settings.

²⁸ See Ska, *Our Fathers Have Told Us*, 27-28.

²⁹ See Bruce, *Acts*, 421; Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37-38; and John Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120.

³⁰ See Bruce, *Acts*, 452-453 and James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 169-170.

1. Cause: The behavioral pattern is rooted in the odium, hate, or anger of the accusers motivated by the diversity of race and religion, e.g., Paul's teachings to the Gentiles (Acts 20:18-20; 21:27-29).

2. Ethnicity and race: The rejection of another who belongs to a different ethnoracial background from that of the accusers (Acts 21:28; 22:21-22).

3. Assumption (voμίζω): The presupposition or conjecture that a person is guilty of a crime without the facts or validation of the true events (Acts 21:27-29.33-38; 22:22-25).

4. Judgment and condemnation: Jumping to conclusions when a person in power or authority mentally performs a judgment that simultaneously implies the condemnation of a person as a criminal without corroborating the factual truth, namely, without an investigation or a fair trial (Acts 21:27-29.33-38; 22:22-25).

5. Violence: The physical consequence of inner judgment and condemnation that are rooted in hate or anger. Physical aggression, therefore, becomes the privileged instrument to eliminate the existing diversity since it becomes a threat to the *status quo* of the accusers or the one in power. The ultimate purpose of the violence in the Jewish setting is death, while the purpose of the violence in the Roman setting is physical flagellation or torture to punish the behavior (Acts 21:28-32; 22:22-25).

6. Incarceration: This is the most obvious treatment exercised by those in power or in position of authority. Incarceration becomes the basic removal of liberty of a person who is suspected or accused of a crime. In the Roman setting, incarceration was a part of the common exercise of power, resulting from a profiling mindset combined with the assumptions of a crime without a reasonable investigation into the facts (see Acts 21:33-39; 22:22-29).

7. Profiling: The usage of some cultural and phenotypic characteristics as the determining factor and indicator of an offense or criminal behavior (Acts 21:27.29.38).

8. Law and citizenship become the only assurance and security manifested in the Roman setting that can preserve the basic rights and physical integrity of the accused person. The Jewish setting in the pericope wants the annihilation of the accused person on the basis of presuppositions. Hence the Roman law becomes the hermeneutical tool of justice for those who fall under it, independently of race and religion (Acts 22:25-29).

9. The victim, Paul, becomes the “stereotype” (τύπος) or representative figure of those who are abused and criminalized based on the assumptions, judgments, and condemnations associated with race and religion. The victim who suffers, according to the Lukan portrait,³¹ becomes the cultural bridge and the hybrid existential paradigm between the different linguistic and religious barriers existing between the Roman and the Jewish settings.³² The hate produced by the movements of ethnic-cultural integration and harmonization becomes the root of the behavioral pattern that criminalizes Paul in the Jewish settings, while the assumption of crime and condemnation without factual examination comes from the profiling mindset of the soldiers—officers of the institutionalized power—through the context of the Roman setting.

The semantic notions of hate, anger, assumption, judgment, and condemnation take place in the inner personal realm of the accusers or agents. This means that these actions are

³¹ Pauline suffering becomes an instrument of Christian propagation. See Paul House, “Suffering and the Purpose of Acts,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33, no. 3 (September 1990): 319-326.

³² See Sze-kar Wan, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality?” in *Interpreting Beyond Borders*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 126-127.

psychological and spiritual dealings that belong to the subjective sphere of a person. I will use the expression *forum internum* to indicate this inner or private sphere of a person's conscience in which these semantic notions takes place.³³

The notions of violence, incarceration, profiling, law, and citizenship, and the resulting victim, indicate the “objective effects” of the inner susceptibilities of a person who is acting as an accuser or agent of authority, coming from a place of having a privileged position of power. These “objective effects” of the inner dispositions take place in an objective factual realm of human relationships and behaviors that may be called the *forum externum*.³⁴

These nine notions are semantic communicative lines describing a general pattern that serves to construe the reality of the Black and Brown communities in the United States. However, it is necessary to explain the applications of such semantic lines to the concrete reality of those who have had such experiences within the Black and Brown groups in the United States, in order to avoid the risk of interpreting U.S. reality by ways of subjective and arbitrary typological lines of interpretation.³⁵

**The Biblical Paradigm of Racial Profiling
Manifested in the Official Exercise of Power
toward African Americans and Latin@s
at the Street Level**

³³ See Gerald O'Collins and Edward Farrugia, “*Forum Internum*,” in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Paulist, 2013), 115-116. See also *Code of Canon Law (CIC)* 74, 130, 144, 1074, 1081-182.

³⁴ See James Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Conscience* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 20-21.

³⁵ I use the notion of typology as the most common methodological interpretation of Scripture when it is applied to a concrete reality. This means that the biblical text becomes the τύπος or notion that finds a reflection or correlation in the reality. I do not deny this sense of Scripture that has been present since ancient times under the allegorical and tropological dimensions. The purpose of my paper is to convey the scientific justification of this ancient practice by using the notions of Cognitive Semantics and Practical Theology.

If I want to demonstrate the validity of the semantic biblical lines of assumption, judgment, condemnation, violence, incarceration, profiling, law, citizenship, and the resulting victim, it is essential to define the practice of racial profiling in the United States in order to see if these nine semantic notions are embedded in the behavioral pattern of U.S. society.

The first methodological clarification is to establish the distinction between “profiling” and “racial profiling.” The term “profiling” refers to a common police practice of viewing and taking into consideration certain characteristics in order to determine a criminal behavior or a crime itself.³⁶ This definition is characterized by generalization because the act of profiling is supposed to be based on the particular characteristics of a specific crime or criminal behavior, and as such it implies a common sense application of this strategy to stop a felonious conduct. For example, a killer of young women has been profiled as being a male, 6,2” tall, and blond with blue eyes. The police will search for such a killer among a certain population that exhibits those physical characteristics. The police or the authorities never will assume that every person who matches those characteristics is “guilty” of the crime for the simple fact of being tall and blond and having blue eyes. According to this logic, it would be absurd for the authorities to behave in such manner.

If the police or the authorities of a country begin to assume (νομίζω) that every tall, blond, blue-eyed male is a killer of young women, the common sense of profiling applied to one unique particular crime is corrupted and distorted to the point that it becomes an “absolute paradigm” in which each person who exhibits the aforementioned characteristics is instantly

³⁶ See Harriet Barovick, “DWB: Driving While Black: Incidents in New Jersey and Maryland Heat up the Issue of racial Profiling by State Highway Patrols,” *Time*, June 5, 1998, 35 and James Cleary, “Racial Profiling Studies in Law Enforcement: Issues and Methodology,” Information Brief, Minnesota House of Representatives Research Department, St. Paul, MN, 2000, 5.

judged and condemned as guilty of that crime without factual evidence or due process, independently of the innocence and dignity of the person. It becomes then a “fallacy of composition” in which the characteristic of a single person is applied to every person who belongs to the same ethnoracial background.³⁷ Therefore the practice of profiling is distorted to the point that it is based uniquely on the characteristic of race or ethnicity as the absolute criterion embodying the feelings of odium for criminal behavior arbitrarily applied to any person who belongs to a particular ethnicity, namely, Black and Brown persons. The motivation of hate can then fuel the assumptions that simultaneously imply the judgment, condemnation, violent punishment, incarceration, and even death of the victims whose only crime is to have the skin color that is used from the distorted absolute indicator as evidence for a crime. This is the very definition of “racial profiling.”³⁸

The racial profiling practiced in the United States is the vivid or pragmatic exercise of the semantic notions identified in Acts, in which the victim, Paul, becomes the stereotype embodied in the Black and Brown victims of today. The victimization is created and harbored not only by the local law enforcement agencies (police), political views, or even the government (represented in the Roman and Jewish settings in Acts), but also by the general mindset of the people (Jewish setting in Acts) who judge and condemn, even though most of the time such inner condemnation does not materialize externally. In this line of thought, the Ontario (Canada) Human Rights

³⁷ “The fallacy of composition consists in treating a distributed characteristic as if it were collective. It occurs when one makes the mistake of attributing to a group (or a whole) some characteristic that is true only of its individual members (or its parts), and then makes inferences based on that mistake.” W. H. Halverson, *Concise Logic* (New York: Random House, 1984), 73.

³⁸ See Cleary, *Racial Profiling*, 5 and 6 and Randall Kennedy, “Suspect Policy,” *The New Republic*, September 13, 1999, 30.

Commission (OHRC) is right in stating that racial profiling is becoming a “generalized mindset” that stereotypes persons based on preconceived ideas about a person’s moral character.³⁹

The most obvious cases of racial profiling are manifested on the streets, especially in traffic violations or at traffic stops. The Black and Brown communities have long claimed that the police commonly use traffic infringement as a pretext to stop and investigate criminal behavior. The profile of the Roman soldiers is clearly manifested in patterns that African Americans call “Driving while Black” (DWB).⁴⁰

The paradigm of assumption of criminality implies judgment, condemnation, and punishment that all materialize at the moment of the traffic stop. The application of the law against a criminal behavior is applied only on the basis of the color of the person stopped. In other words, the simple fact of being Black or Brown is already a crime in and of itself. The statement is logically absurd since it defies the common application of due process implied in the law in order to prevent evil or criminality.

The extension of the abuse of authority permeates other social settings that go beyond traffic stops. Police detentions are more likely to happen in Black and Brown neighborhoods than in White areas that show equal numbers of criminal records. Individually, young Black and Brown persons are more likely to face multiple police encounters and detentions than otherwise identically identified criminal profiles of White individuals. These police encounters can result in searches and even aggressive treatment that are reminiscent of the behavioral pattern of the

³⁹ Ontario Human Rights Commission, *What Is Racial Profiling?*
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/paying-price-human-cost-racial-profiling/what-racial-profiling>.

⁴⁰ David Harris, “Driving While Black and All Other Traffic Offenses: The Supreme Court and Pretextual Traffic Stops,” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 87, no. 2 (1997):
http://law-journals-books.vlex.com/vid/driving-traffic-offenses-stops-53721338?_ga=1.123094664.2080033379.1486833957. See also Cleary, *Racial Profiling*, 7.

Roman soldiers with Paul. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) report “Black, Brown, and Targeted,” published in October of 2014, is an excellent analysis of that situation.⁴¹ The report is the product of ACLU studies using Boston Police Department files that recorded more than 200,000 police encounters with civilians between the years 2007 and 2010. The factual evidence of the files and the report demonstrate what communities of color have been proclaiming for decades, that the Boston police have been targeting Black and Brown persons even when the victimized persons are innocent.⁴²

In other words, the authorities are consciously acting against the paradigm of the law which should correspond to the natural principle of human dignity and protection of the integrity of life. This is a crucial point that can be equally applied to the cases of abusive power towards Black and Brown people and that makes an important distinction between the paradigms presented in Acts 22:25-29. In the Roman setting, even with the common practice of abusive power manifested in the Roman use of *flagellatio* or *verberatio*, incarceration by chains, tortures, and insults, there is a profound respect for the *lex romana*. The Roman commander fears⁴³ the committed actions against the victim in the moment that Paul reveals that he also is a Roman citizen. In this manner, the Lukan account shows on the first narrative level the power of the law

⁴¹ See American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), *Black, Brown and Targeted: A Report on Boston Police Department Street Encounters from 2007–2010* (Boston, MA: ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts, 2014), 1-2; see also Carol Rose, “Black, Brown and Targeted: Racial Profiling In Boston,” in *WBUR Cognoscenti*, 10/10/2014, <http://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2014/10/10/boston-racial-profiling-aclu-finds-bias-stop-and-frisk-carol-rose>.

⁴² See ACLU, *Black, Brown and Targeted*, 1.

⁴³ χιλίαρχος δὲ ἐφοβήθη ἐπιγνοῦς ὅτι Ῥωμαῖός ἐστιν, Acts 22:29. See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 712.

that implies the respect of the civil rights of everyone who is covered by the *civis romanus*.⁴⁴ This implies that the victim had the same human and civil rights as those who were in power, i.e., the Roman commander.

Ironically, the U.S. society that proclaims to be part of the civilized world of the twenty-first century presents a behavioral pattern contrary to the legal principle of the rule of law very well respected by the Romans. The abusive exercise of power based on the concurrent mindset of racial profiling continues to manifest its absurdity and the evil implied in the victimization of the Black and Brown communities today.

The same generalized mindset can be found not only in the typical cases of civilian encounters with the police at traffic stops and elsewhere, but also among common people's biases against Black and Brown persons in shopping centers or stores. "Consumer racial profiling" demonstrates the same generalized mindset that permeates almost every dimension of American life. Consumer racial profiling is the assumption of corrupt characteristics projected onto the main trait of race and used as absolute evidence for making an inner judgment of condemnation. The difference in these kinds of cases is that instead of incarceration or death, the damage is in the psychological and spiritual marks produced by racial profiling and in this becoming a permanent stigma in the lives of the victims, who begin to lose faith in the goodness

⁴⁴ See Cicero, *In Verrem* II.5.170. I.

and acceptance of others.⁴⁵ Therefore, racial profiling produces profound psychological and spiritual violence among any targeted Black and Brown communities.⁴⁶

The ultimate in racial profiling is manifested when this practice culminates in the death of the victim. Such cases embody the Jewish setting manifested in Acts 22:22, which is the odium of the accusers wanting the death of the victim. During the year 2015, the police killed approximately 102 unarmed Black persons in the United States, but this number may be higher if one distrusts the official reports that classify as armed the victims who were *assumed to be* armed, as it was in the cases of Matthew Ajibade, Tamir Rice, Ahmaud Arbery, and Alex Nieto, which I will analyze further.

The statistics shown by the Mapping Police Violence reports indicate that nearly one in three Black persons killed by police in 2015 was identified as unarmed. This means that 37 percent of unarmed persons killed by police were Black persons. This statistical information acquires a more intense meaning when the reader keeps in mind that 13.3 percent of the American population is African American.⁴⁷ This behavioral pattern remains a constant in the statistical reports of police violence. For example, in June of 2015, 32 percent of the victims killed by the police were unarmed Black persons, suggesting a total of nineteen African

⁴⁵ See Jennifer Lee, *Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 168-180 and Catherine Dunn, "Shopping While Black: America's Retailers Know They Have a Racial Profiling Problem. Now What?" in *International Business Times*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.ibtimes.com/shopping-while-black-americas-retailers-know-they-have-racial-profiling-problem-now-2222778>.

⁴⁶ See Hugh F. Butts, "The Black Mask of Humanity: Racial/ethnic Discrimination and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law* 30 (2002): 336-339.

⁴⁷ See Mapping Police Violence, online database website, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/unarmed/>. See also US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, in <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/00>.

Americans. In February of 2016, 41 percent of the victims killed by the police were unarmed Black persons; this means that twenty-two African Americans were killed in one month, namely, one Black person every thirty-two hours.⁴⁸

Behind the statistical information are concrete faces and names embodying the stereotypes of the victim. Among countless examples, I would like to mention four that are astonishing for the grievous evil produced by racial profiling in the U.S. milieu.

The first is Matthew Ajibade, a former Savannah College of Art and Design student, who died when he was 21 years old. While Ajibade was having a manic bipolar disorder episode, his girlfriend called 911; the police report said that he was combative against the authorities. A video later released showed that the police officer shocked Ajibade four times with a taser while Ajibade's hands and feet were shackled, which manifests a strong similarity to Paul's episode of incarceration (Acts 21:33). The officers put Ajibade in a restraining chair, where he eventually died on January 1, 2015. A local coroner ruled the student's death as a homicide by blunt force trauma.

The second case is more shocking because of the victim's age: twelve years old. In November, 2014, Tamir Rice was playing with a BB gun in a park; during this time "an anonymous caller" reported to police that a young Black male was pointing a gun at random people on the street. The anonymity of the denouncer who assumed the crime of the victim echoes the anonymity of the Jewish crowd in the social setting of Acts. The caller, according to the recording of the 911 calls, stated twice that the gun was "probably fake." The police officer arrived and shot the child from within a distance of ten feet. Afterwards, the same officer

⁴⁸ See Mapping Police Violence, <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/reports/>.

arrested Rice's sister, who had run to his aid. Tamir Rice did not receive first aid until four minutes later, from a different deputy who was nearby. He died the following day.

The third case is a prototypical case of the absolute racial profiling that leads to the annihilation of human life in our African American communities. Ahmaud Arbery was a promising young man of twenty-five, whose only crime was to be an African American who loved to do outdoor exercise, especially jogging. Two White persons identified as Gregory McMichael, 64 years old, and his son Travis McMichael, 34 years old, assumed that an African American jogging through the quiet neighborhood of Satilla Shores in Brunswick, a coastal city about midway between Savannah, Georgia and Jacksonville, Florida, was a criminal. Their racial profiling was enough for these two individuals to decide to take action and kill Ahmaud Arbery on February 23, 2020, violating any common sense and civil respect for human life that we are supposed to uphold in our country. The two criminals were not arrested *ipso facto* since it took a while for the authorities to issue an order of arrest for them and this only took place after an analysis of videos by neighbors that showed the heinous crime against an innocent person.⁴⁹

Finally, the case of Alejandro "Alex" Nieto offers a prototype of a victim of racial profiling in an environment of gentrification.⁵⁰ Alex Nieto was assassinated in 2014 in the neighborhood of San Francisco where he had spent his whole life, an area that used to be predominantly Latin@. He had never been arrested, did not have a police record, was not

⁴⁹ See Glynn County Police Department, *Public Release Incident Report for G20- 11303*. Digital public document: <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6915-arbery-shooting/b52fa09cdc974b970b79/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>.

⁵⁰ Regarding the definition and characteristics of gentrification, see Chris Hamnett, "Gentrification and residential location theory: a review and assessment," *Geography and the Urban Environment: Progress in Research and Applications* 6 (1984): 284.

involved in any criminal behavior, and was an active, peaceful member of the community.⁵¹ One day a group of White men saw Alex wearing a jacket with the colors of San Francisco's football team (red and gold) and carrying a taser. Nieto was a security guard in a night club, had been licensed to use the taser since 2007, and was on his way to work. However, his basic characteristics were enough for these men to call 911, announcing that a gang member⁵² or a menacing intruder in "their neighborhood" was about to create problems.

This racial profiling, as part of a generalized mindset, manifested in the behavior of anonymous callers, represents the same kind of racial profiling done by the anonymous Jewish crowd of Acts' social setting. The behavioral pattern of the "anonymous crowd" reveals assumptions, judgments, and condemnations of an innocent person who is presented as an aggressor and criminal. In their *forum internum*, the callers in San Francisco were moved by the fear and implicit hate of what is different, "the other," assuming that Alex, the victim, was a criminal on the basis of his looks. The assumption of criminal behavior implies the judgment and condemnation that provokes the actions of calling 911 and denouncing a danger, which is only manifested in the *forum externum* of the accusers.

The racial profiling reached its summit in the assumptions and actions of the police officers who arrived a few minutes after the call. Four officers killed Alex Nieto by shooting more than fifty-one bullets at him, claiming that Nieto pointed the taser at them and that they mistook its red laser light for the laser sights of a gun. Alex Nieto died on the evening of March

⁵¹ See "Who was Alex Nieto," website "Justice 4 Alex Nieto," <https://justice4alexnieto.org/alex-story/>. See also <https://www.aclunc.org/blog/alex-nieto-black-and-brown-lives-and-need-policing-reform>.

⁵² In San Francisco there are two predominantly Latino gangs wearing distinctive colors: the Norteños wear red and the Sureños wear blue.

21, 2014 and fourteen bullets were found inside his body. He was twenty-eight years old. The brutality of this event makes it very difficult to believe the stories of the officers claiming self-defense.

I use the stories of Matthew Ajibade, Tamir Rice, Ahmaud Arbery, and Alex Nieto as bold examples of the evil produced by such racial profiling and its ultimate consequences: the death of an innocent person.

In the biblical episode of Acts, Paul, the victim, is not killed or submitted to further mistreatment because of the respect given to his Roman citizenship, but in our “modern times” the notions of law and respect for the human life of a fellow citizen have become a “relative or secondary circumstance” subjugated by the distorted and absolute racial profiling frame of mind. We cannot continue to behave according to the Jewish setting of Acts 22:22—*αἶρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον, οὐ γὰρ καθῆκεν αὐτὸν ζῆν*—but we must re-cultivate the basic Christian values of human dignity and protection of life expressed in natural and civil law. We are called to stop the annihilation of someone’s life on the basis of that person’s being considered “bad” on the basis of ethnoracial indicators.

Racial Profiling and the Lukan Notion of Christianity: A Proposal of Healing to Our American Communities

Following the previous line of thought, it is possible to conclude that racial profiling, with all its implications and pragmatic manifestations of evil, is essentially against the Christian message of the Gospel and the behavioral pattern of Paul manifested in the Lukan narrative of the Acts of the Apostles. In other words, racial profiling is anti-Christian. In the same way that racial profiling goes against the values the revealed law, it also goes against the basic human principles and values manifested in the core promises and statements expressed in the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

Paul, in the biblical episodes of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29 and in the entire narrative of Acts, becomes the prototype of the Christian heroic life who needs to strive and proclaim the Christian message in a hostile social setting that ultimately wants to annihilate him. Paul, in these episodes, embodies the role of the victim who is subjugated by hostile treatments motivated by odium on the basis of ethnicity and religion. According to the Lukan paradigm it is possible to propose three basic notions implied in the Christian behavior of Paul that can be helpful as the counter-mindset to eliminate the culture of death and abuse brought on by racial profiling: multiculturalism, integration, and forgiveness.

1) Multiculturalism: Multiculturalism indicates the existence of multiple ethnicities with their respective multireligious forms and practices coexisting in one jurisdiction or country. The role of Paul especially summarizes the multicultural richness of Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Christian cultures. Being immersed in a multicultural and ethnic world, Paul becomes a good catalyzer across cultural and linguistic barriers in order to spread the Christian message that does not deny the richness of diversity—quite the contrary. Through a multifaceted social setting, Paul was able to create communities of faith acknowledging the diversity of charismas as true manifestations of the unique divine source in the Trinitarian God.⁵³ Paradoxically, a similar social setting is manifested in U.S. society and in the church. They are the result of many different members becoming a single social body of persons who reflect the *imago Dei* through the richness of the diversity and multicultural uniqueness.⁵⁴

2) Integration: The notion of multiculturalism implies the idea of coexistence and tolerance, but this is not enough if we want to present a Christian proposal. The Lukan paradigm

⁵³ See 1 Cor 12:1-12.

⁵⁴ See 1 Cor 12:12-26.

manifested in Paul indicates that the multifaceted Christian communities possess a bond that goes beyond tolerance. It implies the acceptance that leads to the integration of the “other,” the one who is different, without losing the richness of each person’s uniqueness. It is important to clarify that when I use the term “integration,” I am not indicating conformity to a hegemonic system in which otherness is lost.⁵⁵ Paul represents the integration of ethnoracial dimensions without eliminating the richness of each one (see Gal 3:28).⁵⁶ The ethnoracial and cultural integration should be read as an egalitarian relationship of cultures in which none has more power over the other. Keeping in mind the somatic metaphor of 1 Cor 12:12-31, the ideal integration is not an asymmetric relationship in which the subordination of many predominates. In the complex reality of the uniqueness of each person and culture, the single parts are equally essential for the well-functioning of the body, namely, the church (not controlled by civil authorities) and United States society, in their respective multicolor spectrum of individuals.

The richness of the Black and Brown communities has been marginalized and underestimated throughout history. These ethnicities have been treated as an appendix of “American culture” and seemingly just tolerated. In reality, persons and communities of Black and Brown ethnicities have integrally shaped and transformed the history of the United States since its foundation. Their ethnic integration is a matter of justice towards all and portrays a fundamental truth that is a part of the rich diversity and heritage of this country beyond only the

⁵⁵ This line of thought is supported by Fernando F. Segovia, “Melting and Dreaming in America: Visions and Re-visions,” in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological Reflections on America from the Margins*, ed. Eleazar Fernández and Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 231-245; see also Buell and Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation,” 237-238.

⁵⁶ See Diana L. Hayes, “To Be the Bridge: Voices from the Margin,” in *A Dream Unfinished*, 57, 60-64; Wan, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality?”, 126-127; and Buell and Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation,” 248-249.

British and White European influences. Paul, in his own speech (Acts 21:39-40), does not deny his Jewish heritage. However, it is vital to understand that Paul also does not deny his Roman citizenship, because it is an essential dimension of his personhood right from birth (Acts 22:25-29). It is crucial to understand this challenging dimension of integration that helps us to see each other not as a threat but as members of a social family where all members have equal human and civil rights.⁵⁷

3) Forgiveness: The aforementioned cycle of evil permeated with racist practices needs to end with a sincere mindset of pardon. Forgiveness becomes the most powerful tool to destroy the hate that remains at the root of racism. The path of reconciliation is always the hardest praxis: it requires a dialogical dimension that involves the accuser(s) or perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). Forgiveness is one of the ultimate Christian prescriptions, exemplified in an absolute manner in the person of Christ (see Lk 23:34). Paul, in the pericope examined here, never condemns his accusers or seeks revenge against them. His silence expresses the will not to participate in a cycle of violence and evil where he is the victim. The perversity of the cycle of evil is that the suffering inflicted on the victim may transform the victim into a potential instrumental cause of evil for somebody else, because the inflicted suffering finds its outcome in hate. Following this line of thought, Pope John Paul II rightly affirms

"... hope that political leaders and peoples, especially those involved in tragic conflicts, fuelled by hatred and the memory of often ancient wounds, will be guided by the spirit of

⁵⁷ See Buell and Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation," 235-236, 238-239.

forgiveness and reconciliation exemplified by the Church and will make every effort to resolve their differences through open and honest dialogue."⁵⁸

The notions of multiculturalism and integration find a point of fusion in the ultimate act of reconciliation through forgiveness. Any process of peace that destroys the cycle of evil needs to start with the acceptance and forgiveness of the mistakes in the *forum conscientiae* rooted in the innermost place within the person.⁵⁹ Therefore, any harm and emotional suffering produced by racial profiling or any racist praxis must be stopped from the root. This requires a radical transformation of the generalized mindset of racism that has endured through actions of all people for centuries within the United States. We cannot continue to be “prisoners of the past,” but must assume a more accurate rereading of each other’s history, accepting and acknowledging the richness of each other. Then we as a nation can avoid hasty and racial judgments in order to acquire a better acceptance and integration of others.⁶⁰

From the point of view of practical theology, it is essential to identify the role of the church, as a community of faith, in the midst of the practices of the American society. This role also implies a process of purification of the Church herself; this means, the Church who should denounce the injustices of racial discrimination needs to liberate herself from attitudes and behaviors that manifest a racial profiling at all levels of the hierarchy and pastoral life. In this way the Church can exercise more effectively her prophetic role of mediation in order to

⁵⁸ John Paul II, “Address to the participants in the International Symposium on the Inquisition” (October 31, 1998), 5, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, November 11, 1998, 3.

⁵⁹ See John Paul II, *Offer Forgiveness and Receive Peace*, Message for the Celebration of the 30th World Day of Peace, 1997, 1.

⁶⁰ See Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Contribution to World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance* (2001), 8-9.

“destroy” the cycle of evil embodied in the racial discriminatory attitude and behavior. In order to achieve the task of ending racial profiling or behavior, the Church must insist in the spiritual disposition of pardon, proper of the *forum internum* and human conscience that leads to a transformational reconciliation which concurrently requires a process of healing from a personal to a social level.⁶¹ Alongside this spiritual process, the good will of the leaders of the American society must be an essential component together with the educational system⁶² along with the role of the media to herald in the defense and value of the human dignity in all its manifestations (*forum externum*).⁶³

In order to conclude this elucidation, which only reflects a single aspect of the complex reality of the United States, I would like to present the words of John Paul II on the occasion of his visit to South Africa in 1995 as pertinent to the present reflection: Solidarity, he said, “is the only path forward, out of the complete moral bankruptcy of racial prejudice and ethnic animosity.”⁶⁴ According to this theological path, our reflections could be humble contributions for this needed process of solidarity and acceptance.

⁶¹ Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, 10-12.

⁶² Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, 13-15, 17.

⁶³ See Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, 16.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *Homily at Germiston Racecourse*, Johannesburg, September 17, 1995, 4, in *Insegnamenti XVIII*, no. 2 (1995): 581, quoted in Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, 22.