

RACIAL RECONCILIATION: A COMMUNAL PROCESS
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Our society and churches continue to be segregated and separated fifty years after the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. Continuing the thought and teachings of Dr. King today calls us to examine Reconciliation understood by unification of the doctrines of the Atonement, the Incarnation and the Trinity. The results are individual and corporate lives marked by inclusiveness, community and freedom - making us people of reconciliation, unifying diversity without losing distinctions.

INTRODUCTION

The strong man (and woman) holds in a living blend strongly marked opposites. Not ordinarily do people achieve this balance of opposites. . . . But life at its best is a creative synthesis of opposites in fruitful harmony.¹

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

After Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia described the Voting Rights Act of 1965 as racial entitlement, Saturday Night Live aired a bit on March 2, 2013, called “Really?!” with Seth Myers and Kevin Hart.² In their satirical diatribe, Kevin Hart alludes to the racism present even within the Supreme Court, stating, “Don’t think you can’t be called racist just because Clarence Thomas is on the Supreme Court. Let me tell you something, *nothing* is more racist than having *one* black friend! I mean *really*? In fact, somehow having *zero* black friends is less racist than having *one* black friend. *Really!*” He goes on to speak directly to the state of Mississippi who had recently and finally renounced slavery. “Mississippi, I know you’re less racist now than you were in 1965, but understand something . . . *no one* was as racist as you were in 1965! Statistically, that was the *best year for racism!*! You claiming to be less racist now would be like being pulled over by a cop for drunk driving and saying, ‘*I’ve been drunker!*’ *Really?!*”

Satirical political rants like these humorously allow us to see what we can tend to overlook in the day-to-day grind of life. As this sketch was seeking to point out, there is much left of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s (MLK) mountain to climb. The concern of this paper is racial reconciliation, specifically within the context of the Church. I hope to continue in the same train of thought and teachings of MLK. The major tension alluded to in this paper by the term “race” is between white and black, Caucasian and African-American. However, it does not exclude the broader problems currently rising in America’s concern with Mexican immigration, or the rising fear worldwide of ISIS and militant Islam. Due to my own background, and in keeping with MLK, the focus of this work is primarily on white and black race relations. Nevertheless, while addressing these specific groups, the call for reconciliation extends to any who feel separated – be it racially, economically, sexually, and even religiously. Thus, regardless of my racial focus, I intend to advocate for a framework of reconciliation for our “neighbor.”

¹ Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*, (Fortress Press Gift ed. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2010) p. 1.

² These were taken from <http://www.hulu.com/watch/462770> (watched Dec. 18, 2015).

To do so, I will lay out my background and involvement with diversity and black/white issues. Next, I will define the problem in our society and facing the church. Then, I will speak to the powers of racism that must be understood when we think about reconciliation in the church. Finally, I will end with a call to action, a theological framework that creates a people of inclusiveness, community and freedom.

MY BACKGROUND

I began my life in the mostly homogenous rural Oklahoma. Due to my heavy involvement in sports, I had as diverse an experience in this setting as most likely possible. Through sports, I met and developed relationships with people different from my upbringing and culture – African-Americans, Hispanics, Caucasians and Native Americans with different socio-economic statuses came together in camaraderie to compete. Reinforcing the benefit of this situation was my parents’ insistence to understand all were to be loved and included. No nationality or creed separated someone from love and compassion.

I felt an affinity with the minority players – whether black or the poor whites. I found this to be my high school experience too, where my best friend was the only racially diverse person in my entire class. Even in college, I have a yearbook photo where my wife (girlfriend at the time) and I are the only white people in the Diversity Club photo.

Ultimately, my journey led my family into the inner city of St. Louis as missionaries. For four years, we lived and worked in an area that was 98% African-American, in a zip code that happened to have the highest homicide rate in the city. It was in St. Louis that my admiration for MLK truly developed. Our experience in St. Louis was the life of the minority, feeling excluded simply due to color. It was a hard adjustment at first, but slowly we found relationships and acceptance. However, St. Louis is highly segregated and extremely racist, both explicitly and implicitly. One can tell where the socio-economic and racial lines change by the very look of a street. In my neighborhood, white people got profiled. One time I was walking on my own block and a police car began following me slowly. I wondered what was going on, after all I was a card-carrying missionary going to our *ministry center* up the block! Growing up in Oklahoma, the police could always be trusted. On this occasion, my intuition told me it was different. I was pulled over and questioned because a “white male” had been described doing something nearby.

These experiences changed my perspective, and I view things differently than before. For example, when we first moved to our current neighborhood in Kansas City, MO (60% white, 35% black and 5% other) to begin a new church, we were surveying the neighborhood with our leadership team and we stopped by the local Target. Now, this team was assembled of pastors and leaders from different denominational churches outside the metro area providing us with oversight. When we reconvened, the leaders were telling us how diverse our neighborhood was. I asked, “How so?” They said, “There were a lot of black people in Target.” I said, “True, but how many of them were shopping?” There was a long pause of silence. Our neighborhood is diverse, but it is also pretty segregated.

THE PROBLEM

"Racism is a doctrine of the congenital inferiority and worthlessness of a people. . . . Yet behind Black Power's legitimate and necessary concern for group unity and black identity lies the belief that there can be a separate black road to power and fulfillment. Few ideas are more unrealistic. There is no salvation for the Negro through isolation."³

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The problems of racism have seemingly risen to the surface once again. The news has been filled with stories of racial injustice and profiling in the last several years. When the news broke about the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, it seemed more to me to be an overspill of what was already latent in the city. My friend matter-of-factly told me stories about cops breaking in and searching the house they were hanging out in with a bunch of friends (they were dealing drugs, so it wasn't completely random). The cops would find a gun, sit everyone down, put the gun in the middle and spin it – whoever it pointed to when it stopped owned the gun and was now charged with carrying the weapon. That was reality – and not uncommon.

At the heart of the issue is what MLK identified as isolation and despair.⁴ His vision was empowered by words advocating for the opposite. They were descriptions envisioning the church community.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Eph. 2.13-15, NRSV)

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. ²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3.26-28, NRSV)

Many surveys recently have said the church is in a decline, however Ed Stetzer challenges these findings saying the church has actually increased its numbers.⁵ How can Stetzer be true, when surveys show the most common perceptions of present-day Christians is that they are anti-homosexual, judgmental and hypocritical?⁶

³ Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here*, (kindle ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1967), loc. 827.

⁴ King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, loc. 84-118.

⁵ Ed Stetzer, "Survey Fail – Christianity isn't dying: Ed Stetzer" *USA Today*, May 14, 2015 (<http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2015/05/13/nones-americans-christians-evangelicals-column/27198423/>) (accessed Dec. 18, 2015).

⁶ David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *Unchristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity . . . and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), p. 27. This book came out at the year that Stetzer's numbers begins, so there is an overlap.

It is not easy to admit, but the Church has struggled for most of its history with acceptance of the other, particularly when the other is different from the majority. More directly – the Church has always struggled with diversity. Even *the* Saint Peter was confronted by Paul for segregating himself from Gentiles at the table (Gal. 2.11-14). It had not been too long after he had received explicit directions by Jesus to go to all “ethnicities” with good news (Matt. 28.19; Acts 1.8) of an inclusive community of freedom. No wonder the Church needed visions like that of John of Patmos. The Church needs to return to a vision of life with God amidst a diverse people (Rev. 21.3, 24-26).

In light of the poll numbers, either society is a reflection of the Church or vice-versa. Rampant exclusion and segregation is not simply due to racist government and laws. There have been plenty of politicians from the Church leading this nation. Instead, something has gone awry in both church and society that inhibits any kind of demonstration we have been called to. “³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13.34-35, NRSV). What Dr. King was calling for is what we still are missing – relationship.

THE PROBLEM VIEWED THROUGH SMALL-SCALE ETHNOGRAPHY STUDY

To study relational reconciliation, I asked two close friends to participate in my research on racial reconciliation. Marc is a fifty-year-old African-American who grew up in the north end of the inner city of Kansas City, Missouri.⁷ Darnell is a thirty-five-year-old African-American who also grew up in the inner city of Kansas City, Missouri.⁸

Marc and Darnell both experienced racism, but differently. Marc grew up in the aftermath of the Civil Rights era, even remembering the feeling of Dr. King’s death. His said his experience with racism began early,

We lived in a diverse neighborhood with whites and Hispanics, but desegregation was the first time I experienced racism. When I was in grade school, we were bused ten miles away from home to a school where kids were waiting for us with rocks, calling us ‘niggers.’ I hated it. I didn’t want to go to school. We even had a police escort. They would spit on us too. One day they even broke a window on the bus with bricks.

Darnell’s experience was not overt.

I wasn’t aware I was black. I went to magnet schools, which were diverse. Plus, I loved a diversity of music that wasn’t typically “black.” I loved the Nutcracker, Baroque, as well as 80’s and 90’s hip-hop. But I didn’t resonate with N.W.A.⁹ I wasn’t from the “streets,” even though I lived in the “hood.” In high school, I got saved and I rebelled against the black

⁷ Marc (not his real name), interviewed by author, Dec. 10, 2015. Quotes are from this interview.

⁸ Darnell (not his real name), interviewed by author, Dec. 10, 2015. Quotes are from this interview.

⁹ N.W.A. stands for Niggaz Wit Attitudes and was a hip-hop group from Compton, California. A recent movie was released about their story, *Straight Outta Compton*.

church experience I had with my grandparents. I went to my friends' white church. That's where I became aware of my blackness! It was positive though. The youth would come up to me saying things like, "Yo, yo, yo . . . what's up?!" I was assumed to know "black things." Still, it hurt cause I wanted to be accepted, but I was treated as "black."

Marc and Darnell had very different experiences in both space and time. Marc was much more tied to black culture and was taught racist attitudes in his family. Darnell was consistently trying to move outside the typical homeostasis and embraced diversity within his family and household. Whereas Marc's experiences of racism mainly occurred in school, Darnell's occurred in the church.

I was dating this girl from the church for a while. She was white. As we neared graduation, I began to shop for a ring. I had wanted to be married since I was eight, and really liked this girl. I remember finding and buying a ring from Kay Jewelers, cause her mom worked at Helzbergs. I went and talked to her parents about it, they looked at me and said, "Y'all are not ready." I didn't say it, but I remember distinctively thinking, "It's cause I'm black." This was my first cut-to-the-heart (racial) experience.

I asked Darnell, "What made you think that it was because you were black?" He replied, "I never felt fully accepted by her parents. I always felt like they saw me as a phase their daughter was going through."

Contrast this with Marc's experience with a white college roommate, Colin, who was from a rural town (in Iowa) and had never been around black people. Marc told me about meeting Colin's parents.

It was ground breaking! They treated me like I was their own. I felt like a part of them. They didn't notice color – just accepted me. I belonged!!! The dad shook my hand and said, "Son." The mom brung me some stuff (cookies and other food). We sat and had a conversation. They said, "We're so happy you're our son's roommate." I was so scared prior to that. . . . It was the love I experienced that undid some of those myths and experiences. The fear of rejection.

Darnell encountered more racial segregation through the Church when being trained for "ministry" at Moody Bible College in Chicago.

Moody was 95% white, conservative, upper to upper-middle class and rural. I really started to feel it (racial prejudice) when I had to cut my hair. I had dreds. The first year they allowed me to twist 'em up, and they told me, "It was because it was an 'extreme hairstyle.'" I was cool with that, cause I kinda liked how it looked anyway. But the next year when I came back they told me I had to cut it. I felt so oppressed – they were supposed to be training people to go into ministry. I started failing classes trying to get out. It scarred me . . . scarred by the church.

Darnell started to reflect on the stories he had told me and said, “All my racial differences happened ‘in the Church’ or a religious setting. It made me embittered toward the Church. It happened in the black church, now also in the white church.”

Darnell and Marc both conveyed their fear of rejection. The fear was cultivated long before the actual experience by society as a whole. Darnell said, “In America, we are trained to see ourselves in light of our differences, not our similarities.” The result is a core narrative of life where we understand ourselves and certain others as incompatible. These are what are imbedded in the concept of “race.”¹⁰

Popular solutions that do not work form guiding philosophies around catch phrases like, “I don’t believe in races – there’s only one . . . the human race.” Or, “I don’t see races, I’m color blind.” Darnell brought these up and said, “These are bullsh*t! Race is a systematic reality not a skin color. I live in a white supremacist society. The white male is the most advantageous in this system.” I asked what solutions might be, and he said, “Racial reconciliation is a reforming of relationships, open-hearted discussions.”

Marc also followed this same train of thought; “I’ve had lots of experiences with people intentionally trying to overcome the barriers that divide people. You can tell when the actions are right, but the heart isn’t. It still communicates superiority – still separation and rejection. It takes people being genuine and passionate to overcome the myth of race.”

THE RESULTS

"Racism is a philosophy based on a contempt for life. It is the arrogant assertion that one race is the center of value and object of devotion, before which other races must kneel in submission. . . . Racism is total estrangement. It separates not only bodies, but minds and spirits. Inevitably it descends to inflicting spiritual or physical homicide upon the out-group."¹¹

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Racial reconciliation begins relationally. Popular evangelical John Piper recently wrote a book on race and racism in which he rightly articulates the two sides of reconciliation –personal responsibility and structural/system reform. His solution, along with many others, is simply “the cross.”¹² Although, I do not disagree completely, we need to ask how the cross answers this

¹⁰ There is a difference between “race” and “ethnicity.” I use the term race throughout this paper because it is a staple in our society. However, I believe race to be a social construction, not a biological reality. In other words, the concept of race is a myth. Yes, people have noticeable differences in their levels of melatonin, but those do not have a direct correlation to biological and genetic factors like intelligence, type of labor one is fitted for, personality, athleticism, etc. For further information consult, Janell Williams Paris, “Race: Critical Thinking and Transformative Possibilities” (pp. 19-32) and Eloise Hiebert Meneses, “Science and the Myth of Biological Race” (pp. 33-46) in Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves, *This Side of Heaven Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹¹ King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, loc. 1141.

¹² In particular, John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), Brenda Salter, and Rick Richardson, *The Heart of Racial Justice: How Soul Change*

issue. The articulation of atonement many are using is one of penalty, payment and satisfaction of wrath. The result is one of guilt management. Reconciliation becomes about managing guilt and fear of missing out on eternal life.¹³ The paradox is that these books talk about freedom from guilt because of the cross, but then use the same guilt to motivate reconciliation.¹⁴

Reconciliation in these ways is disconnected from reality and relationships, and therefore fails to support the Church in effectively reconciling their place, space and neighbor. A doctrinal axiom can be observed here – the more distance between the Cross and its other two doctrinal legs, the Incarnation and the Trinity, the less effect the Church has in this world. In other words, you have a powerless Atonement apart from the Incarnation and Trinity.

The Incarnation of Jesus allows us to see the entire life of Jesus as a part of the solution, including the Cross. Reconciliation in the Church must be understood incarnationally. Jesus was perfected through all he suffered (which was ultimately, but not simply, the cross) (Heb. 2.10). If Jesus is truly God, then what does it teach us about God? If our created purpose is to share in the divine life of God (2 Pet. 1.4), what does it teach us about us?

The Incarnation is God’s divine communication to us and with us. The Incarnation of the *Logos* was not simply to “save humanity from the *guilt* of their sins.” It was also God being God – more fully. I do not mean “more fully” in the sense that he is more God after the Incarnation, but simply that God is more fully known through the Incarnation of Jesus. Thus, the Incarnation is about reconciling the human with the divine, so that the divine can be more fully divine (in fuller relationship and knowledge of its creation) and the human can be more fully human.¹⁵ Embedded in the Incarnation is the need for diversity. Reconciliation is about becoming more fully ourselves.¹⁶

Leads to Social Change (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), even Jaques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom* emphasizes the Cross as the solution to racial reconciliation. Although Ellul’s interpretation utilizes a *Christus Victor* approach, while the others favor a Penal Substitution understanding.

¹³ “Who can begin to calculate the effect of white and black from all persuasions and all parties suddenly delivered from the crushing burden of guilt?” (Piper, *Bloodlines*, p. 89)

¹⁴ As one example, “If we have not loved, we will perish, because there will be no evidence that we are born again and justified by faith” (Piper, *Bloodlines*, p. 185).

¹⁵ I build on the foundation of two of my favorites quotes and Patristics, “Following the only true and steadfast Teacher, the Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, who did, through His transcendent love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself” (Irenaeus of Lyons, “Irenæus Against Heresies,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 526). And, “He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God” (Athanasius, *On The Incarnation*, kindle ed. (VIII.54)).

¹⁶ “This is a multiracial nation where all groups are dependent on each other, whether they want to recognize it or not. In this vast interdependent nation no racial group can retreat to an island entire of itself. The phenomena of integration and liberation cannot be as neatly divided . . . There is no theoretical or sociological divorce between liberation and integration. In our kind of

God's need for diversity is not only a truth revealed in the Incarnation, but also the Trinity.¹⁷ The essential baseline of this mystery confesses God is distinct – Father, Son and Spirit, and yet unified as one God. God's nature is thus communicated as a unity of diversity. It is an integration of the other in its most excellent form. When this is coupled with the Incarnation, we see how God's two *distinct* natures, divine and human, *unite* together into one being – Jesus. The Atonement of Jesus is thus about reconciling distinctions into unity, without losing the distinctions. The three together give light to the form and function of the life of the disciple and the Church.

The result would be incarnated lives and communities in our world where diversity is unified in its distinctions, resulting in freedom. A touch of God on earth. Three central values observed here are inclusiveness, community and freedom. Catherine LaCugna defines these, Inclusiveness entails accepting a person in light of our own common humanity. Community points to interrelatedness at every level of reality, and contradicts those forces destructive to genuine community, especially sexism and racism. Freedom and its corollary, responsibility, belong to the exercise of personhood under conditions of genuine community. *Perichoresis*, embodied in inclusiveness, community and freedom, is thus the 'form of life' for God and the ideal of human beings whose communion with each other reflects the life of the Trinity.¹⁸

Racial reconciliation is the natural outcome of life with God, through Jesus and by the Spirit. It would follow that if God's nature of love involves reconciling diversity without distinction – than so would those who *know* and *love* him. If our churches (and individual lives) do not exude reconciliation (racially, sexually, financially, etc.) than can we claim to know God? This is not a question of where we will spend eternity, but whether we want to know God. Ultimately, knowledge of God transforms us into inclusive, communal and free people. Meaning we would choose reconciliation because we cannot know God apart from each other. MLK's understanding of Civil Rights and nonviolence were built on this same foundation. Coretta Scott King wrote about him, "(T)he central element of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of nonviolence: his belief in a divine, loving presence that binds all life."¹⁹ Then, she quoted from his sermon, *The Man Who Was a Fool*, "All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be."²⁰

society liberation cannot come without integration and integration cannot come without liberation" (King, *Where Do We Go From Here*, loc. 1025).

¹⁷ "Life moves first toward diversity and then toward union of that very diversity at ever higher levels. It is the old philosophical problem of "the one and the many," which Christianity should have resolved in its belief in God as Trinity" (Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2011), p. 103.

¹⁸ Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), p. 272-273.

¹⁹ King, *Strength to Love*, p. ix.

²⁰ King, *Strength to Love*, p. ix.

If reconciliation is a part of God's nature, then the more we know God, the more our life will naturally reconcile. We will be unable to be homogenous. Obviously, this is not our current reality. Institutions will always segregate unjustly in correspondence to their level of relationality. Likewise, when applied to the Church, this directly reflects the churches relationship with God. Institutions are more necessary when God is less present, for the reasons of power Ellul laid out earlier. Many of our racial problems, and our solutions for reconciliation, can be understood and crafted with this backdrop.

PERSONAL & COMMUNAL TRANSFORMATION

“Nonconformity is creative when it is controlled and directed by a transformed life and is constructive when it embraces a new mental outlook. By opening our lives to God in Christ we become new creatures . . . Only through an inner spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit.”²¹

– Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. King quoted a poem from James Russell Lowell to make his point about conformity to the status quo:

They are slaves who fear to speak
For the fallen and the weak;
They are slaves who will not choose
Hatred, scoffing and abuse,
Rather than in silence shrink
From the truth they needs must think;
They are slaves who dare not be
In the right with two or three.²²

Willpower is not strong enough to reconcile broken relationships. MLK was not stronger than other humans; neither was Jesus. Yet, both understood reconciliation to be simultaneously spiritual and physical. There exists a direct correlation between our unity with God and our unity with others – they mutually benefit one another. It is when our life is lived with God and with others that a life of nonconformity naturally departs from powers of society and culture. MLK understood this as well as anyone; this was his vision of reconciliation.

If reconciliation is primarily relational, then it cannot occur without inclusiveness, community and freedom. Programs may help remove barriers to these, but they do not reconcile the relationships and therefore are short-lived and can create the very problems they once sought to remedy. “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”²³ Reconciliation occurs through abiding in the light (John 8.12), or

²¹ From Martin's sermon entitled, *Transformed Nonconformist* (King, *Strength to Love*, p. 17-18).

²² King, *Strength to Love*, p. 17.

²³ King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, loc. 1047 (emphasis added)). The first part of this quote is, “Are we seeking power for power's sake? Or are we seeking to make the world and our nation better places to live. If we seek the latter, violence can never provide the answer. The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.

the vine (John 15.1-8). While these can be intentionally sought through spiritual disciplines, my thesis is that they are a natural outflow in the apprentice of Jesus by the Spirit of God (1 John .2.8-11). It is through a life together with God and the other that we know love and become love. Reconciliation joins our life to the other because through them we know God and his love for us. Joining our lives in such a way as to suffer with the other is the gift of knowing ourselves. This is a gift that is not exclusive to us, but is mutually beneficial to the other. This mutual love and knowledge cultivates organic inclusion, community and freedom. We no longer have to conjure up feelings in others or ourselves through sad images with soft melancholy background music. The other's suffering is our suffering, into which we step freely and fully with them and for them.

If we do so freely, then we are not slaves. If we do so naturally, without expectation for specific results, then we are freed from judging reconciliation by short-lived metrics. It is one thing to suffer with a person in order to alleviate their suffering, which is not a bad thing. However, it is quite a different manner to suffer with the other because of love and a natural disposition that won't allow us to do any differently. If suffering with and for others, is simply a part of the journey toward the likeness of God, then why would one expect certain results for it to end? The freedom from the *expectation* of results is more powerful than expecting something to happen.

MLK had this paradoxical idealist/realist perspective. He advocated for real and specific changes. However, he also wrote that these necessary changes were not what were ultimately needed. They certainly helped, but an inner transformation was necessary, one that would not come simply through a new social status. Again, status is a part of the issue, and a real roadblock to reconciliation. Yet, a new status does not place a person once separated close enough to the other to suffer with them in life, which has been the result since MLK beckoned us toward a better vision in the 1960's.

What is needed today is for our churches to remove roadblocks separating people from suffering with each other. Racial reconciliation is begun through loving people with names. Inequality is created by separation. We must rethink our forms and structures in churches in light of what they teach us about separation. Who is separated from communion at our Eucharist? In our music and liturgy? Who has a voice in our community? The educated? The pastor? We might be well served to have more parties and less "services." Let us create opportunities to celebrate together the createdness of the other in an atmosphere conducive to being known and knowing others through stories and revelry. Let us find God in and through the other, and become a community of many distinctions united through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, for the Father.

Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it." (King, *Where Do We Go from Here*, loc. 1044)
 Also, "It is an odd fact that every time man tries to free himself from dictatorship or from the exploitation of man by man, this leads at once to the setting up of a tyranny just as great. . . . It is pretended that things are now different, that the structures of power have changed, that institutions or intentions or aims are no longer the same. But this is imply a partisan way of hiding the truth . . . It always manifests the same forms. . . liberation carries with it a reproduction of the power that has been destroyed" (Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 158).