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Faith, Grace, and Forgiveness: A Biblical Model for Racial Reconciliation between Law Enforcement and Minority Communities

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INTRODUCTION

The issue to be examined in this report will consider the plausibility and effectiveness of faith-based collaboration between minority communities and the law enforcement profession. The clergy from minority communities sometimes publicly oppose the police, high-profile cases continue to widen the gap of opposition, and strained relations continue. The researcher asserts that the faith community from all parts of society is *the* key component in not only closing this gap, but also in building a true means of reconciling with each other.

The purpose of this report is to examine the issues of racial conflict as it specifically relates to the law enforcement profession and minority communities, discuss past attempts at dealing with the issues, and review what successes, if any, have been made. Further, the researcher intends to draw from his own faith as a means of not only resolving the issue, but moving toward reconciliation through Biblical and spiritual means.

The researcher realizes that there are many different faiths that refer to "a higher being", but will draw on the beliefs of the Christian faith, which recognizes one and only one true God, existent in the trinity as the Father (God), Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit. Further, the researcher believes that the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of God, which gives all means of spiritual guidance and direction necessary to have a personal relationship with the triune God through the gift of grace by Jesus' death and resurrection on the cross. By having this personal level of spirituality and continually seeking to follow biblical truths, many of the attributes of reconciliation and

forgiveness are internalized as core beliefs and are much easier to rely on when in a leadership role.

The method of inquiry used by the researcher will include reading and reviewing books, journals, articles, and internet research from both the Christian and secular perspectives. The anticipated outcome of this paper is an explanation of how faith and scripture form the foundation toward true reconciliation. Additionally, the researcher will devise a model specifically targeted toward reconciliation between these two factions based on Biblical scripture and research. The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research because it presents a way of problem solving that has gone largely ignored yet has the potential to reach beyond any other method or program that has been tried in the past.

In the conclusion section of the paper, there are several examples of how faith-based programs have worked in the past and how they still work today. There is also an example of organizational conflict presented by police administration that could hinder faith-based community relationships and obstacles to the reception of this type of effort. In each of the examples, the reader should realize that a faith-based method of reconciliation is not a government-sponsored program to be implemented, but rather it is a conscious change of beliefs made by individuals who come together as a group of like-minded people to make a concerted effort for change based on these same beliefs.

HISTORY

Historically, the problem of racial prejudice in the United States has existed since the inception of the country. American forefathers brought slaves from the African continent and treated these men, women, and children as mere property while, at the

same time, indulging themselves in the "land of opportunity." Constitutional freedoms were eventually given, resulting in our own Civil War, but the slaves were allowed to go free, and their future generations were supposedly given guarantees of freedom and opportunity as well.

In reality, this freedom did not occur, and the 1950s brought about what has become known as the Civil Rights era. During this time, desegregation of schools and public transportation evolved, and voting rights were finally recognized for all citizens, especially people of color. This did not come without a fight, however, both in the legal and political forums, and, more importantly, in the community forum. Many marches and demonstrations were held, and arrests were made for public disorder by police officers, National Guardsman, and soldiers who were called in to quell the demonstrators.

The methods used by these members of law enforcement are now considered overly excessive in terms of the level of force and how much of it was used. Yet it was prevalent during that time and considered necessary by some. News reports and current academic literature (Cannon, 1997) are replete with real accounts of overtly racial incidents between police officers and members of minority communities before, during, and after the Civil Rights era. These cases are an obvious manifestation of a systemic problem of policing that directed heavy-handed enforcement efforts at people of color in an attempt to do nothing more than enforce cultural preferences.

The Rodney King fiasco is probably the crowning moment of strained relationships between the law enforcement profession as a whole and communities of color. The word 'fiasco' is the most appropriate description of the climate that created

many events leading up to this one. Political and departmental finger-pointing was rampant, and no one in Los Angeles, California wanted to take responsibility for the problems created by the governing power structure in place at the time (Cannon, 1997). While this event occurred 17 years ago, there are implications for the structure, behavior, conduct, and ethical concerns of every police agency in the country.

To summarize, Rodney King was stopped by officers from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), along with several other agencies, including the California Highway Patrol, Los Angeles Unified School District Police, and several neighboring agencies. At the point of the traffic stop, the LAPD took control of the scene, and in the course of attempting to arrest him, they beat him numerous times with batons, kicked him, utilized a taser on him, and, in general, went far beyond reasonable and necessary means to subdue him. What brought this case to the forefront was the fact that it was caught on videotape by a citizen, who, in turn, sold the tape to the media. When the news media made the tape public, it evoked several responses from various parts of the greater Los Angeles community as well as the rest of the country (Cannon, 1997).

There were four LAPD officers, including a sergeant, who were prosecuted at both the state and federal levels of the criminal justice system (*U.S. v. Koon*), and in a federal lawsuit, a judgment was levied against the city for almost four million dollars in damages. While they were acquitted on the state level charges, the city erupted in a massive riot, which exceeded the level of damage and destruction in the Watts riot of 1965. Members of the minority community of Los Angeles pointed to the acquittal as evidence of institutional racism by not only the LAPD, but by the criminal justice system as a whole. In the federal trial, the sergeant and one of the officers were convicted on

the charge of Civil Rights violations, Title 18, US 242. They were sentenced to 30 months in prison, which was viewed as much too harsh by law enforcement supporters and too lenient by the African-American community (Cannon, 1997).

Other high-profile cases have occurred since then, including Malice Green and the Detroit Police Department, Abner Louima and Amadou Diallo in New York city, and Nathaniel Jones in Cincinnati (Wikipedia, n.d.). In each of these cases, officers were at the very least disciplined or fired, and, in some cases, prosecuted and convicted. Other cases across the nation draw similar parallels to each of these, part of which is an African-American suspect who is shot or beaten at the hands of the police, usually involving white police officers. A common theme in each of these cases, whether alleged directly or inferred, is the issue of racism as the motivating factor for the police acting as they did. Community unrest begins to take hold, officers claim defense of themselves and others, and the level of trust continues to diminish.

SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM

As a result of the aforementioned cases and others, many both within and outside of the police profession began to analyze the structure and operations of police departments and make suggestions or offer solutions to correct the problem. In Los Angeles, the Independent Commission was appointed by then-mayor Tom Bradley to investigate the LAPD and determine the root cause of events that led up to the Rodney King series of events. This was known as the Christopher Commission and was headed by Warren Christopher, a former member of the U.S. Attorney's office.

The recommendations of the Christopher Commission were varied. A total of 130 separate recommendations were made in a 228-page report, but most of them

centered on the siege mentality of the LAPD and the high number of claims of excessive force that were never investigated. The lack of concern over citizen complaints gave credibility to the claims of police cover-ups along with the lack of any discipline for any complaints that were sustained. The most significant recommendation involved the implementation of a community policing atmosphere, where officers would be trained to use restraint in dealing with citizens and to show them mutual respect. The commission realized that this would be difficult with the current structure and atmosphere in the LAPD, and the recommendations included changes at the command level and the implementation of a civilian police commission (Cannon, 1997).

In Los Angeles, community policing had existed in various forms under two different chiefs before Darryl Gates. However, Mayor Bradley did not like the philosophy in part because it had been instituted by former chiefs who had become political foes. He further decried it as a public relations function that did nothing more than coddle the black community. However, after the Rodney King incident, many major cities openly stated they wanted to change their method of operation and embraced the community policing philosophy as the best way to accomplish that.

Community oriented policing was largely the vision of professor Robert Trojanowicz, a scholar from Michigan State University, who is known for being one of the early pioneers of the movement. Starting in the late 1970s, he garnered the support of other scholars and researchers and championed community oriented policing to the forefront. Police leaders and their organizations, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) began to realize after the Rodney King that a comprehensive

change in the way police agencies do business was needed. Thus began the move toward community oriented policing, or COP.

About the same time, Professor Herman Goldstein of the University Of Wisconsin School Of Law began to teach about a similar style of policing, known as problem-oriented policing or POP. COP and POP actually complimented each other in terms of problem-solving efforts, but problem-oriented policing focused on addressing smaller problems and smaller gains in eliminating crime than did community policing.

Both of these philosophies were intended to involve the community in decision-making with regard to police operations, a term known as community empowerment. Other researchers had their own ideas of what it was intended to accomplish, and current literature bears this out (Kratcoski & Dukes, 1995). It also showed a lack of consensus among scholars and practitioners alike in providing a concrete definition of COP. They were able to explain what they felt it would accomplish, but even these explanations were varied.

Under President George H.W. Bush, the Crime Control Act of 1991 was implemented, which, among other things, provided federal funding to hire more police officers. The groups and individuals who brought community policing to the government's attention intended for it to be used for community policing efforts. When President Bill Clinton took office in 1992, he created the Office of Community Oriented Policing and Problem Solving (COPPS). Under his administration, the funding through this office was intended to hire an additional 100,000 police officers in cities across the country and place them in community policing positions to further advance the philosophy and reduce crime.

Over the course of approximately ten years, this philosophy was put into practice in various forms across the country. Many chiefs and sheriffs claimed success at different levels while others did not support it or questioned the validity of such a major expenditure. In most cases, federal grant money was made available to local law enforcement agencies (bypassing the state levels of government) for a period of time, which the local jurisdiction had to match in equal amounts of both money and time. These grants also came with stipulations that they be used only for "community policing operations" and not to fund the daily basic functions of law enforcement. However, attrition of the rank and file forced many police departments to put community policing officers in basic staffing positions. Additionally, there is statistical analysis clearly stating that the goal of 100,000 officers was never met (Muhlhausen, Davis, Ingram, & Rector, 2000).

Trojanowicz (1994) said accountability to the community was part of the community policing movement, which included holding officers accountable for their decisions and actions. A common complaint from minority communities was that their complaints against officers were either kept quiet or not investigated at all. If they were investigated, the officers were rarely punished. The Christopher Commission report confirmed this (Cannon, 1997). The process of filing complaints on police officers was expanded to send a message to the public that better attention would be given to their concerns, and officers who acted improperly would be disciplined and possibly prosecuted.

The majority of complaints that came from minority communities usually involved accusations of racism, excessive force, or a combination of both. The core of the

prosecution case against the LAPD officers in the Rodney King case were that they beat him well beyond any reasonable measure, and they did it because of his race. The federal government also stepped in with prosecutions for civil rights violations, even if the officers might have also been prosecuted at the state level. The courts ruled that double jeopardy did not apply under these circumstances and moved forward with regularity on these types of cases.

Racial profiling became a well-known issue during this time also. It was labeled as such due to the belief that officers frequently used race as probable cause or reasonable suspicion to stop a person. This was primarily done along state and U.S. highways that were believed to be major thoroughfares for drug trafficking. While large amounts of illegal drugs were, in fact, being smuggled on interstates, it appeared that most of the people being stopped and arrested were people of color. This led to the accusation that an institutional system of discrimination still existed in the law enforcement profession, although it was much more subtle in how it was practiced.

Many states have enacted legislation prohibiting racial profiling and require that law enforcement agencies file annual reports documenting each contact they have with citizens. In Texas, each agency is required to document the race and gender for a traffic or pedestrian stop, along with the reason for the contact, whether a search was done, and whether an arrest, citation, or warning was issued. The report also requires notation on the person's residency, i.e., if they live in the same jurisdiction where they were stopped or not. Video recordings are required unless the jurisdiction is so small and the equipment is unaffordable. In such circumstances, grants are available from the state to fund or offset the purchase.

Critics of the racial profiling statistics point to the fact that only numbers are collected, and are then compared to demographic makeup (MacDonald, 2003). Most systems do a comparison of minority stops with some very crude population data, which itself contains large gaps in accuracy. These standards are raw and do not hold up to even the best social science data analysis. It usually relies on census information, which is unstable due to the infrequency of its collection and a transient population over the ten-year period between sampling dates. Additionally, there is no identifiable benchmark of how many stops of people of color are "too many."

The New Jersey Attorney General, under the direction of then-governor Christine Todd Whitman, commissioned a study using such raw data collection and analysis techniques, and the outcome was questionable by even the simplest statistical standards (MacDonald, 2003). However, it was a game of political correctness that even university scholars admitted was dangerous to question. Governor Whitman fired the superintendent of the state police for stating that minorities dominated the drug trade, even though there was federal data to support that statement (MacDonald, 2003). However, it was the New Jersey troopers themselves who asked the attorney general to study speeding behavior on the main turnpike coming through the state. They were willing to accept all consequences if this study bore out the prior allegations.

The study did show that African-Americans were more likely to speed almost twice as much as white drivers, but they were stopped less than their speeding behavior would predict. When this report was made public, the new Bush administration tried to bury it, claiming the same as anti-policing foes about bad statistical analysis. Therefore,

the problem went unresolved, and the problem of racial profiling continues to be alleged.

SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

During the Clinton administration, claims were made that the hiring of additional officers for community policing functions exceeded the goal of 100,000. However, the federal COPPS office does not publish the number of officers that left the profession during the same time period, largely due to community oriented policing efforts. The Heritage Society, a conservative think tank, saw the program as another tax-and-spend program aimed at decreasing the authority of the police for the sake of increasing better relationships with the community, especially where a high population of minority people existed. They also brought out the fact that many older officers retired earlier than planned or just left the profession altogether because they saw the emphasis being put on community relations and not on enforcement issues (Davis, Muhlhausen, Ingram, & Rector, 2000). The officers also took their experience with them and decided it was not worth the effort to risk their careers for what was perceived as a political issue (Thibault, Lynch, & McBride, 2004). In fact, many of the experienced officers were forced out of law enforcement either because they saw the problems with the community policing philosophy or refused to participate.

In one issue of *Police Chief* magazine, the official publication of the IACP, a lieutenant from a major city police department in Texas gave a step-by-step plan to remove older officers from the rank and file if they did not agree to participate in community policing efforts (Adcox, 2000). This plan amounted to institutionalized age discrimination, and based on the fact that it was published in an official journal, one can

only assume that such administrative activity is acceptable under the guise of furthering community interests.

COMPSTAT is a system of crime-mapping used to report and track crimes within certain areas. It became well-known in cities such as New York, and regular meetings were held with command officers to review these reported crimes in their areas of command. If certain expectations were not met by senior level commanders, they were replaced and transferred to other assignments. This was a form of accountability for these senior officers, and many of them also left the profession early because of the stress caused by expectations that were considered unreasonable (Thibault, Lynch, & McBride, 2004). The parallel to COMPSTAT for commanders and ticket quotas for officers can be drawn here, but while one is illegal, the other was deemed necessary in the interest of community safety and done at the expense of people's careers and practical experiences.

Consent decree has occurred in several cities around the nation including Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Columbus and Steubenville, Ohio; the New Jersey State Police; and Los Angeles, California. It should come as no surprise that Los Angeles has come under scrutiny by the federal government given the highly-publicized history of law enforcement in that jurisdiction. Consent decree occurs when the federal government takes over the operations of a local police department and mandates that certain criteria be met before being released from federal control. This almost always focuses on issues of disparate treatment of minorities, excessive force protocol as it pertains to its use on members of the minority community, complaints against officers and how they are handled, and police corruption in general. Law enforcement agencies

can either agree to voluntarily submit to consent decree, as Los Angeles did, or the government can sue in federal court to obtain an order mandating submission and compliance by the local agency.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania was one of the first to undergo oversight by federal consent. While many have claimed success as a result of this process; in reality, it was expensive and did little to resolve the problems that many claimed were plaguing the department. There are still high numbers of allegations of conflict between police and the communities of color, although many of the policies put in place by the federal government remain. Los Angeles consented to federal rule in 2000 when Chief Bill Bratton took over. The period of time agreed to has since passed; however, the federal government recently released them from consent rule only after the city filed a legal motion, which the court granted. The only item that was delaying the release was the implementation of a computer system that was designed to pull up all information about an officer and his or her activities over their entire career at the press of a button. Currently, this system has been a technological failure due to the sheer magnitude of its requirements, and there are over 200 police officers assigned to work on this problem. These are 200 officers who could and should be out working in the public, but because of consent decree, were being tied up with bureaucratic issues.

REASONS FOR FAILURE

The reasons for failure of these programs are many and varied. There are problems with data collection, political strife and correctness, lack of proper training for police officers, lack of proper use of force due to training or uncommon circumstances, failure by local governments to truly listen to problems, and entrenchment and

encampment by various persons with charismatic personalities whose self-serving

statements only polarize communities rather than unify them. Police psychologist Dr.

Lawrence Blum (2002) summed it up best when he said,

> A part of the problem between the public and law enforcement, though it is
> difficult for most to observe due to the insular nature of most police agencies,
> involves the way in which police departments are trained, supervised, managed,
> and led. In order to foster and support police agencies that perform ethically,
> society must come to grips with the powerful influences that act upon the
> individuals who serve in law enforcement. How these influences are formed and
> how they are managed will, in large measure, determine how policing is
> performed within that agency. (p. 116)

However, the biggest reason for failure of these efforts is the exclusion of the

faith community and the potential input and guidance it can bring. The faith community

is very prominent, especially in the African-American community, and when issues of

conflict with the police arise, members of the clergy will show a united front in wanting

truthful answers from police officials.

Ministers in minority communities are respected even by non-believers and

people who may not be part of a particular congregation. They are trusted and

respected members of the community and are usually involved in various community

affairs. Some have become politically adept and are able to quickly mobilize people to

address issues of concern. Some of the clergy also work in jobs outside the church and

preach on Sundays, and they are held in even higher esteem.

Sociology Professor Dr. George Yancey has identified four models of dealing

with racism that are frequently seen in cultural diversity programs as well as in various

forms in the community policing philosophy. Dr. Yancey is a Christian, an African-

American, and is married to a Caucasian woman. Therefore, he speaks from both an

academic and a personal perspective. He also offers a Christian solution called the mutual responsibility model, which will be discussed in the next section.

The first model is colorblindness. This theory chooses to ignore the injustices of prejudice and discrimination from the past and put on a supposition of ignoring one's ethnic background and skin color. The primary focus is to look to the future and simply wash away everything negative that has happened up to the present time. Some of the outcomes of this model are claims that affirmative action is no longer necessary because it has accomplished what it intended. In this opinion, people of color now have the same opportunities as everyone else because of this legislation, and continuing it gives unfair advantage to people because of their race. Hate crimes legislation is generally opposed because, to date, there are no documented cases of prosecution for such a crime when a Caucasian person is victimized because of their race. People who support this theory also tend to support reverse discrimination claims.

The second model is called Anglo-conformity. This has some similarities to the colorblindness model in that once minority people are given the tools to succeed, such as education and equal work status, they can be part of mainstream society. Proponents do not always agree that attaining this status is easy, but the goal is to help people of minority status achieve financial and economic success. Most of the supporters of this theory are Caucasians and minorities who have already met with success. It recognizes poverty and economic disparities as the cause of racism and only serves to promote very negative stereotypes of minorities, such as associating them with poverty and crime.

The third model, multiculturalism, allows for people to hold on to their ethnic identity while being part of a larger society and keeping their individual rights in the political, economic, and legal spectrum. The theory behind this model is that ethnic minorities are allowed to maintain their customs and practices without the threat or fear of segregation. Interaction with a majority group is mandatory for this model to function properly. It also demands appreciation by the majority of all cultural distinctives.

Last is the white responsibility model. The dominant group, in this case the Caucasian race, is responsible for all of the problems that created racism and ethnic hatred. Its supporters argue that the white social structures are still an obstacle for people of color, and until the majority group is willing to deal with the problems caused by this institutionalized system of discrimination, the problem will not go away. It also supports the idea that people of color cannot be racist because they have had little to no powerbase in societal structure, and, therefore, are unable to even practice racism. The ultimate goal of this model is for the minority group to tell the majority what the problem is and demand that the obstacles preventing their access to mainstream society be removed.

Dr. Yancey also offers the strengths and weaknesses of each of these models; however, their bearing is not as important as recognizing the fact that they exist. It also shows that there is conflict and discrepancy even between people of color about how to address the problem. The most important fact is that each of these models has played a large part in the philosophy of community policing. With so much conflict even among those who were the intended recipients of a positive model of policing, the philosophy

was doomed for failure before it got started. The theory behind it was well-intentioned, but, like everything else, reality set in and created more problems than it solved.

This leads to the assertion that in order to truly deal with racial conflict, there must be an inclusion of spiritual faith in resolving the problem, especially at the personal and local community level. People are subject to human error, and conflict is bound to happen. When the faith community is recognized and included in dealing with racial conflict, an entirely new dimension is presented with a proven history of peace making that transcends human understanding (Law, 2002).

THE SPIRITUAL FACTOR

There are many different denominations that look to a higher being. Other denominations also have a component of peace and reconciliation in their core of beliefs, but this researcher would not do proper justice to other religions whose faith is not centered in the Bible. This is not to say that other faiths do not have valid points or beliefs, only that some of the differences in faith may conflict with Biblical teachings. The Christian faith also teaches compassion and service toward others, regardless of what another person may believe in, and thus is quite conducive in reaching out to any segment of a community.

In the Christian faith, believers hold true that there is one and only one God who exists in the trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God the Father sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross as an act of unselfish sacrificial love, so that man no longer had to offer personal sacrifices under Old Testament law. Three days after his death, Jesus rose from the grave and is now in heaven with God the Father. The Holy

Spirit is the comforter that indwells in each believer and is the conduit between God the

Father, God the Son, and man (Book of John, New King James Version).

The way to life in the Christian faith is very simple. Through a quiet act of prayer,

anyone can simply acknowledge to God that they believe in Him and the death and

resurrection of Jesus Christ on the cross as sacrifice for our sins and ask forgiveness

for their own sin. This is called salvation. The promise from God is that if anyone

confesses their sin and accepts Jesus as the Messiah and his ultimate sacrifice on the

cross, he will faithfully forgive those sins (I John 1:9). The Bible also states that God

throws those sins as far as the east is from the west, and He remembers them no more.

The emphasis is rescue from the power and dominion of sin in one's life. Included with

these sins is the sin of racism, which stems from personal pride. Reconciliation is a

benefit and a by-product of salvation, and this will be discussed further on in this paper.

While it sounds like an insurance policy for mankind to gain admission to heaven,

it is the very core of belief by Christians and a way by which to live while on earth. The

Bible commands that believers do only two things: Love the Lord God with all your

heart, soul, and strength (Matt. 22:37-39), and to love your neighbor as you love

yourself. There are several verses in the Bible that affirm this, but some definitions of

faith, grace, and forgiveness need to be given in order to understand the basis of how

Christians are commanded to act toward each other, as well as toward those who do

not believe.

Faith can be defined as trust, belief, or firm persuasion. In speaking about

religious faith, it means putting trust in God in all matters of life, even those that are not

understood by human standards. Conflict and questions with this belief arise when

people rely on their own understanding to decide if God is real or as powerful as people of faith claim. In the book of John, the Bible speaks of the Spirit dwelling within us (John 14:16-17).

Grace is defined as a loving, merciful, and perfect good gift. Grace is what made reconciliation possible between perfect God and sinful man because of his own sacrifice on the cross. What is important to recognize and understand here is that grace is extended to all of mankind through faith and not of any act of good work we do by ourselves (Eph. 2:8). This is key to recognizing most of the failures of community policing since it became a program designed by man, with the demand that people commit to the philosophy and improve racial relationships with parts of any community while leaving God out of the picture. The commitment was forced onto officers and members of the community alike from an external source and was not a personal commitment from within oneself as grace epitomizes.

Forgiveness literally means "to take away" and is a characteristic of God by "taking away" sin. Jesus Christ did this as part of his gift of grace, and Christians are to put on the character of Christ and forgive others. Scripture commands that others be forgiven in the same way that God forgives each person, which he does because of personal faith.

This leads to reconciliation, which is an exchange between two people specifically as it relates to their personal attitudes toward each other. The change in the relationship goes from one extreme of hatred and discontent to one of friendship and fellowship on a personal level. As it pertains to one's relationship with God, one must first reconcile themselves to him, both at the time of salvation and at any time where

something hinders a personal relationship with Him. Only through a relationship with God can people begin to reconcile ourselves with each other because of Christ's redeeming love and grace. The Bible calls this breaking down the wall of hostility. Bearing this in mind, it is easy to see how this would have a direct impact on racial reconciliation among Christian believers.

Even within the church itself, racial pride, prejudice, and bigotry have existed. Many even used scripture to justify the separation of the races within the church (the church being all believers in Christ or the body of fellowship of Christ). However, the Bible is full of examples where racial and ethnic lines were crossed for the sake of Christian fellowship, and the New Testament mandates that mankind reconcile with each other for the sake of building up the church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 2:16).

THE BIBLICAL MANDATE FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Part of the reason for tension and conflict among the races is the fact that man has left God out of the fabric of our everyday lives, and this has permeated the church as well. When applying scripture to the problem of racial conflict, even among Christians, there is partial reliance on information from the academic fields such as sociology and psychology while the spiritual factor is left out. Christians share a frustration that those who support racial pride and multiculturalism also make the charge that Christianity is a Euro-centric religion (Ware, 2001), and the white race uses faith as another reason to "look down" on people of color. When combined with the fact that members of the clergy are sometimes used as pawns by people who are concerned with their own power and greed, it only serves to further this belief (Ware, 2001). The current culture, then, is what influences how we apply scripture toward racial issues and

not first consulting and applying scripture to the culture. Christians cannot tolerate this attitude. Racial reconciliation cannot be just a priority, but must be made a major theme of the New Testament church.

Christians must be unified in their beliefs that they are of one kindred Spirit through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Congregations gather to worship and praise the one and only true God, but fail to reach out to other believers who may not be from the same ethnic background. The church as the body of Christ, the priesthood of believers, must follow the teachings of the New Testament church and extend fellowship to believers of all races.

Well-known preacher and evangelist Billy Graham once said, "Racial and ethnic hostility is the foremost social problem facing our world today" (Graham, 1993, p. 27). The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) realized their charter was allowing the denomination to divide itself. During the annual meeting in 1995, the SBC adopted the Resolution on Racial Reconciliation, as well as revised Resolution 25, the Use of Black Ministries (The Annual Meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1995). Through both of these items, the Southern Baptist denomination recognized and put into place the teaching of the New Testament that God's love for his church extended to all people. More importantly, they also extended the olive branch of redemption, especially to the African-American congregations within the Southern Baptist denomination.

In Ephesians chapter 2, the apostle Paul spoke of unity among believers by the breaking down of the wall of separation. This passage of scripture primarily addresses the historical relationship between Jews and Gentiles before Jesus' death and resurrection. Gentiles were considered by the Jews to be physically distinct because

they were not circumcised, a practice that was believed to be unclean. This was such a distinction because of the separate way of life that the Jews did not consider them spiritual equals. They justified this by saying that the Gentiles were separate from Christ, they could not become citizens of Israel, and the covenants with God were not available to them. The Israelites knew they were God's chosen people and did not want anyone else intruding on that. Clearly, Jew and Gentile are joined together, but not by one assimilating to the other culture. By Jesus' death and resurrection, he created an entirely new way of fellowship in Him based on grace, and the hostile atmosphere that once existed between Jew and Gentile was destroyed.

There are other examples of Christian reconciliation in the New Testament that exemplify a model of fellowship with people of other races. One example is found in John chapter 4 where Jesus himself speaks to the Samaritan women at the well. As it relates to Jewish culture, Jesus crossed several cultural lines that made the Pharisees upset. First, the Samaritans were a people of mixed race, which started when the Jews were held in captivity in Babylon. They were considered to be less than human by the Jews and are what we would most likely see today as a bi-racial person. Second, this woman was either involved in an adulterous relationship or had been married and divorced at least five times and was not married to the man she was currently living with. Third, the Samaritans had been given their own place of worship by the Jews as they did not wish to worship alongside of them. Lastly, this woman was drawing her water from the well at midday, when other Jewish women were not around. Despite these self-described reasons for separation from others, Jesus himself asked her for a drink of water, engaged her in a conversation that identified himself to her as the

Messiah, and spoke to her about the 'living water' that only he could give. In doing so,

he crossed all boundaries set down by the Jews as an example of fellowship with each

other (John 4:1-26).

True confession and redemption has to be part of any effort at racial

reconciliation among Christians. This must go beyond a few gatherings or meetings to

discuss any differences. There has to be intentional work done at all levels of

fellowship, both personal and corporate, and the effort must be done on a continuing

basis (Washington & Kehrein, 1993).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ and his saving grace must be at the forefront of all

efforts of racial reconciliation both within and outside of the church. Unity is considered

a symptom of the reconciliation work of God, and the Church as a body has to put a

priority on unity within itself with an eye toward mutual acceptance and responsibility

(McCartney, Porter, & England, 1994). In 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, the Church is

commanded to reconcile with one another because God reconciled himself to us though

his Son. It is through this example of Jesus Christ that people can resolve their

differences and affirm each other as believers.

BIBLICAL APPLICATIONS TO THE POLICE PROFESSION

All of this is important to understand because it is the basis of reconciliation.

People must first reconcile themselves to God, then to each other…and 'each other'

includes police officers. It would be foolish to say that racism does not occur within the

law enforcement ranks, but it does not happen in the institutionalized manner that many

would believe. The law enforcement profession is made up of human beings with the

same life issues as everyone else. While people from communities of color state their

frustration and anger at unfair treatment from police, officers also have come to claim unfair accusations of racism directed at them, supported by a political climate that does not always appear to believe them.

This is where Yancey's (2006) model of mutual responsibility begins to take shape and start to influence believers of the Christian faith. He stated that when intentional efforts are made to fellowship with each other across racial lines, the church will begin to make a change in racial relations as a whole (Yancey, 2006). The Bible commands us to 'love others as we love ourselves,' which means ministering to the needs of others without expectation of receiving anything in return. Overcoming racism is absolutely within this spectrum of Christian beliefs and practices, but because of the past issues of human depravity, it will take a much more concerted effort to start the process of healing and fellowship. Yancey also stated that forgiveness is crucial toward reconciliation but pointed out that reconciliation assumes a relationship previously existed (Yancey, 2006). While a personal relationship between humans may not have been in place, the relationship does exist because of God's grace, and scripture clearly states and supports kinship with other believers through the commonality of faith.

Lastly, Yancey (2006) stated that white Americans are not the only people who are guilty of damaging race relations. He readily admitted that people of color will often play the race card, i.e. claim racial discrimination in an attempt to get something they want when, in fact, racism is not an issue. This only widens the gap of racial divide further for selfish reasons and is not an example of Christian ministry. On the other hand, he does support bringing issues of racism to the forefront when legitimate racial discrimination has been committed.

At the heart of the mutual responsibility model is a high level of concern for others viewpoints without being overly sensitive to what is said. It is very important for members of the majority group to listen to both the historical issues and present concerns from people of color. The argument that historical problems of racism no longer exists is invalid; the fact is it still causes a great deal of personal and emotional pain for people of color (Porter, 1996). The correct act of Christian ministry is to be sensitive to those painful memories and consider the needs of others with those concerns. Conversely, people of color must also be open to the needs and concerns of the majority group and realize that not all of their problems were caused by white Americans.

Lastly, the mutual responsibility model as a Christian solution is not a tangible program or set of ideas. It is an attitude of service to others, which comes from within a person's own set of beliefs. Ministry is a selfless act of service, an act of love because of grace, and grace exists because of the selfless act of Jesus Christ on the cross. This is an internalized belief that is attained by choice and not an external value of an organization that is imposed as a philosophy and a condition of employment.

This is the very reason community policing has failed is for this very reason. The philosophy was created by man as were the core values and mission statements of police departments. These were made part of the operational standard of how police agencies function. Nevertheless, with human error, political pressure, and insistence by management, the philosophy became a program and did not live up to its own expectations. Faith, however, is a choice that, when made and followed willingly, becomes an internalized belief that guides people in every part of their daily lives.

When choosing to serve others because of faith, it is chosen because it is a part of God's direction and Christ's example (Boone, 1996). By having this personal level of spirituality and continually seeking to follow biblical truths, many of the attributes of leadership required in law enforcement are internalized as core beliefs and are much easier to rely on when in a leadership role.

A MODEL FOR RECONCILIATION SPECIFIC TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

The community policing model mandates that officers become more involved with the people in their beats. Veteran officers will tell the younger ones to get out of their cars and just talk to people. Having good beat information and knowing the people in your assigned area is a hallmark of a good police officer. This researcher's proposed model is nothing more than following these maxims, but with specific emphasis on the faith community.

Christian police officers are spread throughout the profession, and there are several fraternal organizations for them. In the African-American community, ministers are frequent leaders within their sphere of influence, and police officers will commonly seek out their help when dealing with problems in their neighborhoods. The Christian officers and the ministers from minority communities need to seek each other out, first for fellowship in Christ, then to serve each other and those in the community they serve. Community policing would call this action a partnership or collaboration, while people of faith would call this ministry.

No doubt there would be opposition because of the alleged conflict between church and state. A suggestion to avoid this would be for the officers to meet and fellowship with any church or ministry coalitions while off duty. In this way, it would not

take on the appearance of an official act while at the same time allowing the officers to relax more than they might otherwise and to allow for a true time of fellowship and worship together. Police officers do not leave their faith at the door when they put their uniforms on and go to work. In fact, scripture also recognizes government officials in general, and police officers in particular, as being ministers to those who do good and to impose judgment on those who do wrong (I Pet. 2:13-15 & Rom. 13:4). This does not mean that police officers can simply mete out street justice at the place and time of the offense. Scripture reinforces the fact that God has put rulers in place to govern, and that people are to submit to those governing authorities. This is evident in the higher standard imposed on those in government, including police officers, who are subject to the rulers as well. (Obviously, a corrupt government would not survive under God's authority as it would not serve others in true ministry.)

Reconciliation requires that a relationship be established, and a true relationship in Christian faith requires intentional acts toward that fellowship. Through this relationship, police officers, ministers from minority communities, and church members can all encourage each other through the commonality of faith. However, this has to be an on-going and continuous relationship. As with most police "programs," they are short-lived when immediate results are not recognized, and people tend to give up on them. This is where intentional and open worship has to take over. One of the best things Christians can do together is pray.

Scripture says that whenever two or more are gathered to pray in Jesus' name, God's power is there also (Matt. 18:20). One group in Austin, Texas gathers people from churches throughout the city to have a day of prayer walking (Hawthorne &

Kendrick, 1993). This group gathers to walk through various neighborhoods, praying as they go, for issues they may be aware of in that area, for the schools and the safety and education of the students and teachers, for people they meet while walking the neighborhoods, and for the police officers that patrol the area. This could also include praying in front of the police station or district substations and encouraging the chief of police and command staff by ministering to them and the difficult decisions they are faced with too.

A ministry of prayer done in combination with churches in minority communities, the Christian police officers in the department, and any other officers who work in the areas where a high number of minority citizens live could accomplish the same thing. When a major incident involving the police and a community member becomes high-profile and questionable, off–duty Christian officers and ministers from the community could gather and pray for a just outcome. While there may be divisions of opinion about the circumstances, the common faith of Christian beliefs would be the basis for a peaceful and truthful resolution.

A good effort of intentional relationship from the community toward the police would be for ministers and their congregations to openly let the police and the public know that they are praying for them. Individual officers do not have to have personal faith, but the church as a body of believers can and should still pray for them. 'Adopting a cop' for the specific purpose of remembering them in daily prayer is part of the responsibility of Christians to pray for others and specifically for those in authority.

The ministers or church members may choose to simply pick out an officer to pray for. They may also do simply things such as write or call the officer to let them

know they are being prayed for, stop by the station to tell them the same, or invite them to stop by when in the neighborhood. Whether the officer chooses to respond is a matter of their own choice. The important idea here is that through this simple act of ministry, others will see these quiet acts of Christian witness and know that God's hand is very active in people's lives.

Social science research is difficult to do. Principles of faith and spiritual beliefs are concepts considered to be abstract in the 'problem identification' stage of research, making these concepts even harder to measure for the simple fact that they are unable to be observed and cannot be limited by numbers (Vito & Blankenship, 2002). Grace is given in infinite measure, and simple acts of ministry are too numerous to be counted. However, in order to demonstrate the belief that a Christian effort of policing involving minority communities works, the following examples show how faith, grace, and forgiveness have worked in the past and continue to work toward true reconciliation.

The Ministers Against Crime in Ft. Worth, Texas was formed by a group of ministers who wanted to do something about the high crime rate in their neighborhoods. While, working with the Ft. Worth Police Department, they developed the minister's police academy (similar to the citizen's police academy) to train themselves and other ministers about police operations. With the approval of the police department, they are given police radios and will drive through the neighborhoods looking for anything that requires immediate police attention. There has been a noticeable drop in crime since the ministers have started their patrols.

This group of clergy has also been used to diffuse potentially violent situations. On many occasions, they have stopped at scenes where police officers may have a car

stopped and a crowd begins to gather and taunt the officers. The ministers will get out

of their cars and talk to the group, urging them to go back to their homes and let the

police do their job. To date, there have been no incidents of violent crowds where

Ministers Against Crime has been involved (Gordon, 2003).

The Boston Ten Point Coalition grew out of a series of events that culminated in

a gang shooting at mourners attending a funeral of a rival gang member. Police and

clergy had previously been very frustrated with each other, and this event was the

nexus that convinced them to work together. It started with two ministers and two

officers and has grown to 50 officers and an equal number of clergy working together.

The coalition members began going into the neighborhoods and talking directly

to gang members. They worked to gain their trust and, at the same time, informed them

that their criminal activity would no longer be tolerated. In some cases, they even

convinced gang members to surrender their guns and showed them how to lead more

productive lives.

They also began to accompany police officers on visits to youthful offenders.

Families with delinquent children saw visits by the officers themselves as bad news.

However, members of the clergy are trusted and respected, and when they accompany

the officers, they are much better received, and the visits are welcomed by the parents.

The intention of these visits is to speak with the parents about their child and the

destructive behavior they are starting to show. The minister usually takes the lead in

speaking first and the parents are usually more willing to open their doors to a member

of the clergy. Through this meeting, they start to see the police as people who truly

want to help them with their child (Gordon, 2003).

In Jasper County, Texas, Sheriff Billy Rowles was serving in his first term during 1998 when Mr. James Byrd Jr. was murdered. Mr. Byrd, an African-American man, was offered a ride home by three white men who turned out to be confirmed members of the Aryan Brotherhood prison gang. They tied Mr. Byrd up with a chain and hooked the other end of it to their pickup truck, and then proceeded to drag him to death over a distance of four miles.

Sheriff Rowles did several things that greatly helped from a law enforcement investigation standpoint, including calling in the Texas Rangers and the FBI to help. He realized that the case would require resources that were not available locally, and the investigation would most likely involve the inclusion of a hate crime. Calling in outside agencies is something many agency heads are reticent to do, but he did not want to lose any investigative leads because of ego.

He also did something that turned out to be the best thing for all parties involved. Sheriff Rowles openly stated in his presentation that he was a Christian, and he immediately called pastors from the black community together. Once they were assembled, they stood in a circle, held hands, and prayed. He also kept them apprised of the progress in the case as it proceeded through the arrest and trial of the murderers.

During the initial days of the investigation, Jasper County was bombarded by the media, and two well-known civil rights advocates also came to town to voice their displeasure. The pastors from the African-American churches approached both of them and very pointedly told them they were welcome if they were there to truly help, but if they came to cause trouble, to get back on the plane and go home.

Jasper County also had visits and demonstrations from the Ku Klux Klan and the New Black Panther Party. The pastors, church members, and Sheriff Rowles continued to bathe the entire matter in prayer together, and Sheriff Rowles said he is convinced it was the gathering of the pastors and the communal prayer that covered this community with peace. There was not a single incident of violence during this time. He continues a relationship even today with Mr. Byrd's family (Rowles, 2000).

Dr. John Perkins is a minister, an African-American man, and a Christian with a strong personal testimony. Dr. Perkins grew up in Mississippi during the 1930s and 1940s, a time when Jim Crow laws were still common especially in the south. When he was a child, his older brother was killed by a white police officer. His brother had returned from military duty in Europe during World War II and had been decorated for wounds he received in battle. However, in Mississippi, he was considered less of a man and segregated from white people. While waiting at the 'blacks only' entrance for a movie theatre to open, someone started a shoving match and police responded. During this time, one of the officers started to strike another black man with his baton and Dr. Perkins' brother grabbed it, trying to stop the other man from being unfairly beaten. The officer took offense to this and shot Dr. Perkins' brother in the stomach, then walked away and left him for dead.

Later in his life during the 1950s and 1960s, Dr. Perkins was involved in the Civil Rights movement and was jailed for 'civil disobedience.' While there, the officers beat him and several others without mercy, taunting him with racial slurs and threatening to kill him for "bleeding on their jailhouse floor." They gave him a mop and a bucket of water and forced him to clean up his own blood, even though he was passing out from

the beatings. Dr. Perkins said it was only by God's grace that he survived this night and several other occasions during the movement but emphasized that he had to forgive these law enforcement officers for what they did because God tells us to. He chose to forgive them in order to be obedient to God's word, the Bible (Trent & Perkins, 1996).

CONCLUSION

This paper has taken a long-winded approach to a very large problem, and does not contain all the answers to the solution. Racism is a very complex issue even when limited by sociology and psychological explanations. These two fields tend to ignore or even exclude faith and spirituality when they should be including it as part of the solution to this issue. With so many different opinions on how to eradicate racism and prejudice, it is difficult to decide how to address the problem. Even within the Christian church, there are different denominations that have varying theological doctrines, but each of them also bases their entire existence at the foot of the cross where Jesus Christ claimed victory over all of mankind's sin.

While some of this research paper may seem anecdotal, it is something this researcher believes in very heavily. The idea started over lunch with a relative who is also a police officer and a pastor. This relative works for the Austin, Texas police department, which has been under scrutiny for several high-profile cases where people of color have been shot and killed by police or where claims of excessive force were made. The observation was made that whenever these cases arise, the ministerial alliance from the African-American community is at the forefront of calling for police reform and demanding that the individual police officers be fired and prosecuted for hate crimes (R. Field & B. Lane, personal communication, June 2004).

The Austin Police Department has an organization within the ranks called 'Cops for Christ.' They meet monthly during a lunch hour, and even the committed officers who work the night shift get up after only a few hours of sleep to come. They share a meal, have a guest speaker from various parts of the community, and pray together. During one of these high-profile cases, the Cops for Christ group approached the chief and said they wanted to meet with the ministerial alliance in an effort of Christian conciliation and to help keep the peace in the community. The chief told them that since the case was under investigation both criminally and administratively (Internal Affairs), they could be considered in violation of department policy by interfering with an on-going investigation. This same chief also created a photo opportunity for himself by dressing up in his uniform, having several members of his command staff do the same, and attend a church one Sunday whose congregation was primarily African-American.

This points to, and affirms the fact, that a faith-based coalition between police and communities of color must be proactive in their efforts prior to a major incident. In doing so, the tenets of fellowship and common faith are in place and an atmosphere of peace can prevail. If the faith community waits until after something happens, faith and fellowship still exist, but the immediacy of physical peace in the community becomes the primary objective.

As one can probably tell by reading this paper, it is a very personal issue to this researcher, who has also been investigated by Internal Affairs (and thankfully cleared) for accusations of racism. Past observations have been that people of color may use their race in an attempt to get the police to leave them alone and not deal with them in an official capacity. Other officers have lost their careers and sometimes their freedom

either because they truly did commit a crime, or because of political and community pressure.

Taking the adversarial stance such as claiming reverse discrimination or supporting litigation for false reports and defamation of character on behalf of other officers is a legal process that has worked in the past. However, this can only serve to divide a community on the issue even further. Communities have erupted in violence over racial conflict with the police profession, and there has been no tangible progress made toward any true measure of reconciliation. However, a focused ministry between police officers, police departments, and local churches will solve much more than what has been done in the past. This is the researcher's own vision for ministry, and prayerful steps have been initiated toward doing this. While it seems like a monumental task, the Bible is clear where it says that 'the faith of a mustard seed can move mountains' (Matt.17:20).

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