

The Role of Christianity in Reinforcing Racial Hierarchies in the United States

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Abstract

This article employs a sociological lens to critically examine the historical, institutional, and theological relationships between Christianity and White supremacy in the United States. Arguing that race is a socially constructed system embedded within American institutions, it explores how religion—specifically Christianity—has functioned as a key legitimizing institution in the maintenance of systemic racism. Christian theological frameworks have often reinforced racial hierarchies, moralized Whiteness, and sanctioned exclusionary social norms that marginalize non-White populations. This study is a literature review that serves as a reminder of the power of religion, and particularly Christianity, to establish and reinforce racial hierarchies. Today, this reminder is more warranted than ever. The study further investigates how institutional Christianity has actively participated in shaping and sustaining racialized structures within the housing system, especially homeownership. Simultaneously, the article juxtaposes these sociological insights with an exegetical analysis of biblical scriptures that affirm the inherent value, equality, and divine purpose of all human beings. Through scriptural texts, the study highlights a counter-narrative within Christianity that upholds human dignity and spiritual equality. Moreover, it reflects on the symbolic use of light and darkness in Genesis and the theological portrayal of Lucifer's fall and role as a deceiver to underscore the complexities of religious interpretation. The article seeks to reconcile the dissonance between Christianity's foundational egalitarian ideals and its historical complicity in racial oppression, contributing to the broader sociological discourse on religion, race, and institutional power.

Keywords: Christianity, White Supremacy, Systemic Racism, Institutional Power, Theological Legitimization, Race, Religion, Social Inequality

Introduction: The Sociological Imperative

Understanding the intersection of Christianity and White supremacy requires a sociological lens that emphasizes race as a socially constructed system deeply embedded within American institutions. Religion—particularly Christianity—functions as one of these institutions, shaping moral attitudes, legitimizing norms, and sanctioning behaviors that have historically

advantaged White racial groups while dehumanizing others. Moreover, religion—particularly Christianity—has played a significant role in permitting racialized social norms, conditioning White righteousness values, and ratifying laws that disproportionately benefit White individuals while marginalizing non-White racial and ethnic groups. Regarding religion, race, and institutional racism, racialized differential treatment operates through established societal structures—family, education, economy, government, criminal justice, health care, and religious communities—rather than solely through individual actions. Religious institutions, especially some Christian churches, have historically provided moral sanctioning for exclusionary practices, contributing to a social order that privileges Whiteness as normative and superior. Christianity, as a cultural and theological authority, has often endorsed racial and ethnic hierarchies under the guise of spiritual mandate. Religious institutions have not merely been passive players; they are active in conserving power structures that marginalize non-White populations. Two clear examples of how Christianity has been employed to reinforce White supremacy and racial hierarchy in the contemporary United States are through Christian Nationalism and White identity politics coupled with silence and complicity in White Christian churches. The following discussion contributes to the necessary sociological inquiry to understand how religious institutions maintain and challenge systems of racial power.

The Biblical Symbolism of Light and Darkness:

Divine Creativity and Purpose in Creation

The symbolic use of biblical metaphors such as light and darkness also reveal that original scriptural meanings—often representing divine creativity and order—have been distorted in racialized interpretations that conflate darkness with evil and blackness with moral inferiority. The sociological significance of this misappropriation is that it contributes to internalized and structural racism, reinforcing stereotypes and legitimizing the devaluation of black and non-white bodies. In the Genesis account, the omnipotent Spirit of God, in the void and darkness, spoke, “Let there be light” followed by the establishment of the divinely ordered creation with the final “Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness,” with man becoming a living soul, thus completing His work. Everything God had made was good; everything was well-designed. In Genesis 1:2, it is expressed that the earth was formless and void with darkness on the face of the deep, suggesting that God was personally connected with the concept, void of any unfavorable implication. In Genesis 1:3, the word “light” is introduced. Both concepts “darkness” and “light” are two clear indications of holy creativity and assigned positive value. The two divine concepts are good, with an equivalently positive divine purpose reflecting the idea that both light and darkness hold positive connotations in the biblical account of creation, highlighting the purposeful role each plays in God's design.

The Biblical Origins and Role of the Deceiver: Lucifer's Fall

Furthermore, we examine the biblical characterization of Satan as the “father of lies” and a deceiver, suggesting that the use of Christian theology to justify White supremacy represents a profound spiritual deception. By misusing Scripture to rationalize systems of racial domination, religious institutions not only compromise the ethical foundations of the Christian faith but also perpetuate a moral and theological falsehood that undermines social justice. The following verses emphasize the dual focus on the origin of Lucifer (Satan) as a fallen angel and his ongoing role as a deceiver, drawing from key passages that describe his prideful fall and his deceptive influence throughout Scripture. Primary scriptures indicate the genesis of a created being who fell from grace, a proud and powerful being referred to as “Lucifer.” “How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low upon the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself the Highest.’ But you are brought down to the realm of the dead, to the depths of the pit” (Isaiah 14:12-15, NIV).

Ezekiel 28:12-17 is a metaphorical description of Satan's fall, depicted through the lament of the king of Tyre, who is likened to a once perfect and beautiful being cast out due to pride and corruption: “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ““You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: carnelian, chrysolite and emerald, topaz, onyx and jasper, lapis lazuli, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created, they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created until wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So, I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So, I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings” (NIV).

These passages are interpreted by many theologians to refer to Satan's initial creation as a beautiful and powerful angel, who fell from grace due to pride and rebellion against God. The interpretations vary, and some see these passages as addressing earthly kings metaphorically, while others see them as revealing deeper spiritual truths about Satan's origin. In the Bible, Lucifer, also referred to as Satan, is often depicted as a deceiver and liar. In Genesis 3:1-5, the serpent (Satan) deceives Eve in the Garden of Eden by twisting God's words and leading her to sin. In John 8:44, it is written: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want

to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." In 2 Corinthians 11:14, we read: "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10, Paul indicates that "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with how Satan works. He will use all sorts of displays of power through signs and wonders that serve the lie, and all the way that wickedness deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so were saved." In Revelation 12:9, it is written: "The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels were with him." Finally, in Revelation 20:3, we read: "He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time." Scripture stresses that Satan's role is as a deceiver, illustrating his nature as the father of lies and his efforts to lead humanity astray through deception and falsehood.

The Intrinsic Value of Human Beings in Scripture

This analysis highlights how biblical teachings affirm the inherent dignity, value, and equality of all people, regardless of race. Scripture consistently emphasizes that every human is made in God's image, known and valued by God even before birth, and called to live out love and compassion toward others. Verses such as Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:14, and Galatians 3:28 underline human worth, unity, and divine purpose, forming a strong theological foundation against racial hierarchy. However, these inclusive messages contrast with the historical misuse of Christian doctrine to justify racial oppression, revealing a deep contradiction between core Christian values and their institutional expression. The Bible advocates a vision of humanity rooted in divine intentionality, equality, and universal love. These scriptures illuminate the essence of sacred creation, love, parity, and meaning according to every person on earth. This biblical authority and acceptance advocated that all human beings were the progeny of Adam and Eve, with the notion that humanity derives from and belongs to an exclusive species from a common origin.

The Social Construction of Race: Ideological Foundations and Racial Hierarchies

In sociology, there is broad consensus that race is a social construct with no natural basis (Omi and Winant 1994; Roth 2016). The ideology of White racial superiority persisted despite lacking any objective metric of superiority. Historical accounts from African and Asian civilizations undermine claims of inherent European superiority (Horseman 1981). Nonetheless, sociologist Herbert Spencer introduced a perspective suggesting that White Europeans evolved more rapidly, thereby justifying colonial domination as divinely sanctioned (Marten 1999; Jackson and Weidman 2005, 2006). This narrative linked race with naturalized hierarchies,

establishing physical features as markers of in-group (“us”) and out-group (“them”) status—particularly Whites versus non-Whites (Healey 2023).

Globally, this dichotomy cast White Europeans as inherently civilized, while non-Whites were framed as uncivilized “Others” (Sherman and Clore 2009). Since the 16th century, this constructed racial logic has been used to rationalize and sustain inequality, despite declarations of equality in White-dominated societies. Sociological literature affirms that race was deliberately constructed to link physical differences with social hierarchies, positioning Whiteness as superior and non-White identities as inferior (Haney 1996; Blackburn 2010; Tanner 2015). The resulting “us vs. them” ideology has underpinned in-group favoritism and out-group exclusion, legitimizing racial disparities across institutions—even within societies professing equality and opportunity (Gelfand et al. 2011; Carter and Murphy 2015; Ball and Niedlich 2022; Vo et al. 2025).

The Social Construction of Race: Pseudoscience and Racial Hierarchies

Scripture affirms that all human beings possess inherent value. Acts 17:26 declares, “From one man he made all the nations,” emphasizing our shared origin. Genesis 1:26 states, “Let us make man in our image,” affirming equal worth through divine likeness. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 12:12–13 celebrates unity in diversity within the church. These verses reflect the biblical principle that God shows no favoritism and values all people, regardless of race or ethnicity. In parallel, empirical evidence from social science refutes the idea of racial superiority (Jackson and Weidman 2005/2006; Tucker 2007; Jeynes 2010). Race is a social construct, not a biological reality—originating in colonial logics and later used to classify and rank people (O’Connell, Bratter, and Casarez 2022). Pseudoscientific figures like Samuel Morton and Arthur de Gobineau falsely legitimized ideas of racial hierarchy, influencing discriminatory policies such as immigration quotas and eugenics programs (Ball, Steffens, and Niedlich 2022). Scientific racism, often paired with religious justification, reinforced these racial hierarchies through flawed biological claims (Ammerman 2017).

The convergence of religious doctrine and pseudoscience institutionalized the racialization of human worth, shaping societal structures to this day (Dennis 1995; Butler 2021). Though race has no biological basis, its social definitions have been codified into American cultural and legal history. Scholars have extensively traced how race became associated with White superiority and non-White inferiority (Berger and Luckmann 1963; Omi and Winant 1994; Haney Lopez 1996). The Oxford English Dictionary notes that the word “race” first appeared in English in 1508, used to mean “groups” or “kinds.” Over time, particularly through colonialism, slavery, and scientific racism, it evolved to classify people by physical traits like skin color (Loomba 2002; 2016). Despite its historical weight, modern genetics affirms there is no biological foundation for racial superiority (Tucker 2007). In modern history, false claims by

social scientists that labeled certain human groups as inferior influenced catastrophic events—most notably Adolf Hitler’s campaign to exterminate Jewish people (Marten 1999; Roth 2016; O’Connell et al. 2022).

This dehumanization process, rooted in spiritual deception, was legitimized by respected professionals. Among the most influential was physician Samuel Morton, who in 1839 introduced a five-race classification system based on cranial measurements (Biddiss 1966). Morton claimed that Whites (“Caucasians”) had the largest skulls, linking cranial capacity to intellectual superiority, and suggesting that non-White groups were inherently inferior (Dennis 1995). In 1854, J.C. Nott and G.R. Gliddon expanded Morton’s theories in *Types of Mankind*, arguing for the fixed nature of racial groups and supporting segregation to preserve “racial purity” (Nott and Gliddon 1854). Their work promoted the idea that racial mixing would contaminate the so-called purity of light-skinned populations (Keel 2013; Keel 2018). Around the same period, French aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau contributed to this ideology by attributing moral and intellectual superiority to White people—particularly the so-called Aryan race—while labeling non-Whites as morally and culturally inferior (Marten 1999). These narratives elevated Whiteness as a standard of righteousness and reinforced the notion that racial separation was not only natural but necessary.

Together, these thinkers laid the groundwork for the institutionalization of scientific racism, shaping deeply rooted beliefs about race, superiority, and moral worth. Their influence extended far beyond academia, providing ideological justification for systemic oppression, colonialism, and genocidal violence. Gobineau argued that the Aryan “race’s” global expansion produced many “sophisticated” societies. This belief held that white-skinned people were naturally suited to rule advanced democratic societies, while non-white people were destined to be ruled (Biddiss 1966). Biological writings and evolutionary theory from Charles Darwin further fueled racialized ideologies and influenced sociologist Herbert Spencer. While Darwin’s work had limited direct impact on sociology, he suggested that natural selection over time created different racial groups with predominant traits, although genetic diversity showed little correlation with race or behavior (Dennis 1995). Spencer developed a social evolutionary theory linking race to societal progress (Dennis 1995; Tucker 2007; Jeynes 2010). He argued that positive societal outcomes occurred when closely related racial groups intermixed, whereas mixing between less related groups led to negative outcomes. Spencer concluded that racially homogeneous societies evolved into more civilized, complex, and stable forms, while heterogeneous societies became more uncivilized, simple, and unstable (Dennis 1995; Tucker 2007; Jeynes 2010). These ideas reinforced racial hierarchies by framing racial purity as essential to social progress and stability. Herbert Spencer’s analysis linked social development to the concept of “survival of the fittest,” suggesting that those well-adapted to society would thrive, while the maladapted would not survive (Jeynes 2010).

This framework justified notions of racial superiority and inferiority, especially in relation to Indigenous peoples in North America (Dennis 1995; Tucker 2007; Jeynes 2010). Indigenous populations were labeled “savage tribes” with uncivilized, simple societies that failed to adapt compared to the “civilized” and “complex” European colonizers (Dennis 1995; Tucker 2007; Jeynes 2010). These ideas, influenced by scientists like Darwin and Spencer, shaped social policies. For example, under the Coolidge Administration, U.S. immigration quotas favored Western and Northern Europeans, based on fears that racial mixing would lead to “racial deterioration” (Jeynes 2010). Spencer’s social Darwinism thus provided ideological backing for racial hierarchies and exclusionary policies.

Racial Hierarchy and the Invention of Whiteness:

The legacy of racialized ideologies persists in contemporary structures and cultural narratives, upholding Whiteness as the normative standard for civility, development, and desirability. “Whiteness” functions not only as a racial category but as a social position of power, reinforced through institutional practices and cultural norms—often unconsciously maintained by its beneficiaries (Omi and Winant 1994; O’Connell et al. 2022). As scientific consensus rejected claims of biological superiority, the United Nations affirmed that racism falsely asserts a scientific basis for ranking human groups, declaring instead that equality is rooted in universal human rights (Tucker 2007). Race-based ideologies associated lighter skin with value and darker skin with undesirability, positioning non-White groups as inferior (Washington 1984). Historically, Whiteness was constructed as synonymous with goodness and purity, while non-Whiteness and darkness were linked to evil. White people were portrayed as civilized; non-White people as uncivilized (Sherman and Clore 2009). Colonizers viewed non-White populations as primitive and underdeveloped—needing protection, guidance, and the imposition of White culture and institutions (Maxwell 1975; O’Rourke 2005; Miller 2010). These views justified both overt and covert colonial policies designed to subordinate non-White groups and maintain control (Keel 2018).

The Role of Christianity in Shaping Racial Hierarchies

Historically, Christian doctrine and Scripture were manipulated to justify imperial conquest, slavery, segregation, and systemic racism. The spread of Christian theology often occurred through imperialism, colonization, and slavery, shaped by human, not divine, agendas. Scriptures like Matthew 28:18–20 and Acts 1:8 were distorted to support colonial and imperial ventures, even though these verses call believers to share the gospel—not to dominate or enslave. The Christian community has at times explicitly and implicitly reinforced racial hierarchies, using theological interpretations to support a global pecking order of ethnicity and race (Bell 2004; Jones 2016). Certain religious leaders and their followers used Scripture to promote and defend White dominance and the subjugation of non-White people. Christianity

thus became entangled with racialized ideologies of superiority and inferiority (Doll 2000; Fuller et al. 2008; Ammerman 2017). These ideologies became tools of dehumanization. One particularly harmful interpretation involved the doctrine of divine chosen. Liturgical frameworks cast European Christians as God's chosen people, while excluding non-European believers (Haynes 2002; Tanner 2015; Harris 2020).

In this way, religious belief was weaponized to legitimize racial exclusion and reinforce global systems of oppression. The interpretation of Scripture to portray White Europeans as divinely favored served as a powerful mechanism of oppression. Colonization policies across the globe were justified by the belief in divinely ordained White superiority. In this framework, White European culture was seen as spiritually supreme, while non-European cultures were relegated to the lowest ranks of humanity (Goldenberg 2003; Eck 2017; Chaves 2021). This ideology sanctioned European conquests, the enslavement of Africans, and the destruction of Indigenous cultures. The Roman Catholic Church played a significant role, with papal leaders authorizing global colonization through the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine deemed non-Christian populations as heathens to be civilized and justified inhumane treatment under the guise of divine will (Maxwell 1975; Miller 2010; Jones 2016). Both Catholic and Protestant institutions promoted racial theologies through interpretations such as the Curse of Ham, Manifest Destiny, and Calvinist predestination. These religious frameworks legitimized slavery, colonization, and the subjugation of non-Europeans. Though Catholicism and Protestantism diverged theologically, both traditions engaged in racialized oppression. Within Protestantism, particularly during the Reformation, Calvinist ideas were distorted to claim that God predestined only White Europeans for salvation. While Calvin's original writings do not teach this, religious authorities manipulated his doctrine to exclude non-White, non-European peoples from divine grace. This misinterpretation fueled ideologies of White global dominance and divine exclusion (Jeansonne 1971; O'Rourke 2005).

The social construct of White supremacy fueled the European strategy of "divide and rule," enabling the conquest of Indigenous peoples and the transatlantic slave trade. These actions were often justified through manipulated biblical interpretations, claiming that Africans and non-Europeans were divinely ordained for subjugation. Many prominent ministers held contradictory views—preaching the gospel while defending slavery (Eltis et al., 2010). Religious endorsement of racial slavery not only reinforced White dominance but also aligned with the rise of modern capitalism and state-building. European powers—including the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch, English, and French developed distinct but interconnected systems of slavery, each adapting the institution to serve their political and economic interests (Blackburn 2010; Dallimore 2010). These empires advanced racialization and the plantation economy as tools of expansion and control. The ideological claim that God supported White dominance, paired with

colonial doctrines like “divide and rule,” enabled mass displacement and dehumanization of non-European peoples across the globe (Blackburn 2010).

In the United States, this ideology manifested in the removal of Indigenous peoples and the erasure of their cultures—justified by the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, which cast territorial expansion as divine will. Christian laypersons and clergy have historically intertwined scripture with support for slavery (Watkins 2021). Many White Christians drew from the “Curse of Ham” narrative in Genesis to justify the subjugation of Africans, interpreting it as divine sanction for their enslavement by White Europeans. This interpretation shaped Christian canons and practices that portrayed White Christians as righteous and divinely authorized to enslave people with dark skin. Over time, White supremacy ideology expanded across major institutions—government, education, media, science, and religion (Glenn 2015). Christian denominations often embraced racialized theories, citing scripture to defend slavery. Even after its abolition, White Christian leaders continued to support segregation, reinforcing racial hierarchies. Some White Christians further used distorted readings of scripture to justify race-based separation as God’s intended social order—invoking passages like “the poor will always be among us,” or misapplying biblical teachings on government authority and racial separation (Giles 1994; Hawkins 2021; Watkins 2021).

These theological justifications were often bolstered by pseudoscientific claims rooted in Social Darwinism, blending racial ideology with religious belief. As a result, White Christians rationalized complicity in disenfranchisement and racial violence as divinely sanctioned. These beliefs persist in certain strands of modern Christian nationalism, where White supremacy is embedded within theological and political ideologies. Some churches and individuals promote these ideas from the pulpit (Emerson 2014; Wessinger 2020), reinforcing anti-immigrant, anti-civil rights, and racially exclusionary positions—particularly within segments of the evangelical Christian right.

However, the Christian tradition has also produced counter-movements. Abolitionists, many of them believers, actively resisted slavery and racism, offering a theologically grounded opposition to White supremacy. The biblical gospel of love often stood in contradiction to the notion of White supremacy within Christianity. In the 18th and 19th centuries, religious convictions fueled the abolitionist movement to dismantle slavery. Both Black abolitionists—such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and the Langston’s—and White abolitionists—like William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Wendell Phillips—risked their lives to end dehumanization and laid the foundation for modern human rights activism (Smith 2018; Baker 2023). These abolitionists drew on Christian principles of love and human dignity to challenge racial injustice. Contemporary sociologists (Hiebert 2020; Vos 2022; Hatch 2024) continue to advance counter-narratives grounded in Christian love and justice as critical responses to religiously sanctioned racism.

Religious Justifications for White Supremacy and Racial Division

In religion, White colonizers perverted biblical scriptures by asserting that the Creator of the Universe ordained and favored White members of humanity while bestowing a curse and disfavor on non-White members (Goldenberg 2003). This theological distortion underpinned segregation in both public and private life in American society, with contemporary implications evident in the divergent religious responses to racial justice movements (Kaplan 2019). For instance, clergy and laypersons justified stereotypes that assigned significant worthiness to White groups and unworthiness to non-White groups (Jennings 2010). These false and misguided biblical interpretations deeply contaminated the White Christian community, fostering ferocious hatred that supported White inclusion and non-White exclusion across various social spheres—churches, schools, workplaces, restaurants, parks, and neighborhoods alike (Johnson 2004). Considering the disproportionate killing of non-White Americans by White police officers, demands for justice have elicited markedly different reactions within the Christian community, contributing to divisions around movements such as “Black Lives Matter,” “Blue Lives Matter,” and “All Lives Matter” (Johnson 2004; Hiebert 2020).

Navigating Whiteness and the Dynamics of Prejudice and Discrimination

Racism in American society operates through both individual prejudice and structural mechanisms. While some approaches emphasize personal choices and cultural behaviors, critical race frameworks highlight systemic barriers non-White Americans face in a society that privileges Whiteness. Racism manifests in personal discrimination (e.g., racial slurs) and institutional practices (e.g., redlining, segregated schooling), leading to unequal outcomes for non-White populations. These disparities are reinforced by stereotypes that elevate White groups and dehumanize non-White groups. Interdisciplinary studies acknowledge racism’s impact on non-White Americans in a society that values Whiteness (Goldberg 2014; Keel 2018). Some scholars focus on cultural decisions made by non-White individuals, while others emphasize exclusionary structures (Sherman and Clore 2009; Couenhoven 2005, 2010).

Sociological perspectives underscore historical barriers designed to exclude non-White groups (Krysan and Crowder 2017), shifting the focus from non-White behaviors to their navigation of a society that favors White groups (Chester and Walker 1974). Race-related attitudes and beliefs are socially taught (Jones 2020), and prejudice — judging others based on perceived traits — influences thought but not always behavior. Discrimination, however, reflects actions: individual (e.g., slurs) or institutional (e.g., redlining, housing covenants). Whether enacted by individuals or institutions, discrimination favors White Americans while disadvantaging non-White citizens. Both prejudice and discrimination stem from reductive stereotypes, which, when negative toward non-Whites and positive toward Whites, evolve into biased practices (Edgell and Tranby 2007; Tranby and Hartmann 2008).

Race, Religion, and Homeownership: Segregation and Its Resistance

The intersection of race, religion, and homeownership in the U.S. highlights how residential segregation and White evangelical resistance to integration perpetuate racial inequality. Drawing on Du Bois's "color line," housing patterns reveal a legacy of institutional discrimination from the 20th century onward (Du Bois 2003). White evangelicals often framed their residential choices as expressions of liberty and faith, yet theological justifications masked systemic exclusion. Distorted interpretations of Christian doctrine supported segregation, fueling White flight and opposition to fair housing during and after the civil rights era. Religious narratives further legitimized exclusionary practices favoring White Americans, especially in post-WWII suburbs (Mulder 2012; Harris and Berrens 2014).

Though income inequality affects homeownership broadly, institutional systems—real estate, banking, insurance, and policy—have consistently advantaged Whiteness. Non-White groups, including African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, have faced systemic barriers to homeownership, reinforcing racial hierarchies in economic mobility (Alba and Logan 1992). White backlash often followed perceived threats to group status, amplified by political rhetoric that racializes economic anxieties (Melcher 2023). Religion, race, and housing policy intersect to perpetuate inequality in American life. Scholars have affirmed W.E.B. Du Bois's 1903 prediction that the "color line" would remain a central issue in the U.S. (Jackson 1987; Charles and Hurst 2002; Ammerman 2017). Segregation across urban, suburban, and rural areas dominated the 20th century and persists today (Blauner 1972; DuBois 2003). During the segregationist era, housing policies operated subtly at the macro level while shaping individual housing choices. Research highlights how systemic racialized processes produced unequal outcomes for Whites and non-Whites over time (Jackson 1987). Post-WWII, White evangelical suburban homeowners often framed housing decisions as expressions of liberty, even amid shifting racial demographics. Views on neighborhood integration varied, with some evangelicals arguing that neither Judaism nor Christianity mandated racial integration as a religious obligation (Curtis 2021). White evangelical theology during the White flight era often obscured recognition of systemic racialized practices (Emerson and Smith 2000; McGreevy 1996; Mulder 2012; Watkins 2021). Writers have documented how African Americans and other non-White groups were excluded from the American dream of life, liberty, and homeownership (Alba and Logan 1992; Krysan and Crowder 2017).

Discriminatory practices were frequently justified through distorted scriptural interpretations. Some Christians' staunch support for segregation and opposition to integration stemmed from the belief that God ordained a racialized social order, influencing resistance to equal housing access (Hirsch 1995). During and after the civil rights movement, theology was misused to rationalize White flight and deny the immorality of segregation. Even when scriptural support was weak, opposition to fair housing for non-Whites—especially African

Americans—remained strong (Dodds 2010; Dupont 2013). Homeownership is a widely valued social and economic asset in the U.S., though access is shaped by race and class. Not all non-White Americans are uniformly excluded, nor are all White Americans universally advantaged (Harris and Berrens 2014). Income levels also impact access across racial lines. However, institutional policies have historically favored Whiteness, granting White Americans higher rates of homeownership (Sharkey 2013; Frisone 2013).

Racialized policies enacted by government, banking, insurance, construction, and real estate sectors have collectively discriminated against non-White groups (Rothstein 2017). From the inception of American homeownership, Whiteness was privileged, with policies deliberately excluding non-White individuals (Haney Lopez 1996). This led to poorer infrastructure and lower property values in non-White neighborhoods, while White areas benefited from better infrastructure and higher values (Hirsch 1983; Hirsch 1995; Charles and Hurst 2002; Shapiro 2004).

Sociologist Robert Blauner argued that non-White groups—including Native Americans, Hispanics, Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans—faced systemic barriers (Blauner 1972). Policymakers constructed a racial hierarchy that elevated White populations and marginalized non-Whites. Blauner's analysis suggests upward mobility for non-White groups remains more difficult (Healey 2023). When non-Whites gain mobility, White groups often react negatively, especially when perceiving economic threats. Political actors exploit these fears, using in-group/out-group dynamics to stir economic discontent and secure votes (Mutz 2018; Melcher 2021). Polarization around race-related issues remains strong, making "race" a difficult topic—especially for White Americans. Politicians have used both overt and covert racial messaging tied to policies like immigration and affirmative action to appeal to White voters by portraying non-White, non-Christian Americans as societal threats (Mutz 2018; Jardina 2019; Melcher 2021; Melcher 2023). Drawing on René Girard's theory, Vos (2022) explains how societies project fears onto marginalized groups, turning them into scapegoats, often resulting in racial violence. He also draws from classic sociological thinkers (e.g., Simmel, Bogardus, Du Bois) to show how societies construct "strangers" through in-group/out-group dynamics. Connecting this to biblical narratives, Vos argues that the recurring figure of the stranger is central to Christian ethics, and that true Christian identity transcends social divisions and promotes inclusion.

Conclusion

The historical and sociological entanglement of Christianity with the construction, legitimization, and reinforcement of Whiteness and racial hierarchy is clearly a massive issue. By examining Christian theological interpretations used to justify White supremacy—from colonial conquest to U.S. segregationist policies—this analysis highlights how religious doctrine

has been employed to exclude non-White groups from full social and moral inclusion (Hawkins and Sinitiere 2013; Hixson 2013; Prior 1999; Liew and Segovia 2018; Saperstein and Penner 2012). Key insights derived from the analysis of this article substantiate the argument that Christianity to date, has been employed to reinforce White supremacy and racial hierarchy in the contemporary United States through Christian nationalism and White identity politics, advancing a belief that the United States is divinely ordained to be a Christian nation while increasingly endorsing the notion of White identity politics. Research shows that among White Americans, strong adherence to Christian nationalist ideology correlates with heightened racial solidarity and a belief in defending White political interests which entails viewing Whiteness as central to national identity, supporting policies that disproportionately benefit White Americans, and opposing multiculturalism and immigration as threats to a “Christian” national character.

The conclusions drawn from this article clearly indicate that this fusion of religious and racial identity is being used to justify exclusionary politics and reinforce a racial hierarchy under the guise of preserving religious tradition. Furthermore, the summary of the above literature analysis indicates that complicity in White Christian Churches has been documented with a historically general practice of remaining silent on issues of racial justice. This silence persists today in many congregations in which the legacy of slavery and segregation is rarely acknowledged in conjunction with sermons and teachings that avoid confronting systemic racism. White Christians often resist efforts to address racial inequality within their own institutions. These are clear examples that show how religious belief, when intertwined with racial identity and political power, can be used to uphold exclusionary systems rather than dismantle them (Emerson and Smith 2014). Despite the misuse of scripture, scholarship has been put forward advocating for unity among believers emphasizing that racial reconciliation is integral to the gospel as well as the gospel being the source to confront racial injustice with a prescription for healing social divisions. Such scholarship calls upon churches today to embrace a theology rooted in solidarity and equality which requires reclaiming the social gospel tradition to address racial injustice. An actionable first step is to recognize and confront the church’s historical complicity. In the Bible, as the opening statement in this article indicated, Lucifer, who became Satan, the father of lies, is the deceiver of the world. Members of humanity who are adherents of Christianity must reflect on the past and present historical moments when false teachings are propagated. More importantly, persons who are Christ-followers must also admit, confess, and acknowledge the misuse of the gospel with repentance for the lies of racism.

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