

A Solid Black Hyphen:
Race, Religion, Identity, and the Black Power Activism of Gayraud S. Wilmore

By

Douglas H. Brown Clark

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Religion

May 8, 2020

Nashville, Tennessee

Approved:

James D. Hudnut-Beumler, Ph.D.

Dennis C. Dickerson, Ph.D.

James P. Byrd, Ph.D.

David Michelson, Ph.D.

Copyright © 2020 by Douglas H. Brown Clark
All Rights Reserved

To Kara

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to my committee members, David Michelson, James Byrd, Dennis Dickerson, and James Hudnut-Beumler. This dissertation arose out of coursework and conversations with Drs. Byrd and Dickerson. Dr. Dickerson first suggested Gayraud Wilmore as the central subject of the dissertation, and he also connected me to Wilmore himself, turning an archival project into one which also relied on oral history and further involved the cultivation of a meaningful relationship with Dr. Wilmore and his family. James Hudnut-Beumler has served as my advisor through multiple degree programs over the past eight years, and he and Heidi have welcomed me into their home and supported me at a personal level throughout that time. Each of my committee members have asked important questions and provided new insights to help guide this project to completion.

Thank you to my entire Vanderbilt community, including faculty and staff as well as undergraduate, Divinity, and graduate students in various departments, who have encouraged and supported my studies for nearly a decade. The Vanderbilt Graduate School, Graduate Department of Religion, and Program in Theology and Practice also supported my work by enabling me to present on this research at several conferences.

My research travel itself was enabled by funding from the Presbyterian Historical Society. Thank you to the PHS staff, including Lisa Jacobson, Beth Hessel, and Fred Tangeman, who guided me to great resources before, during, and after my visits. PHS also gave me the opportunity to write a post for their blog, through which I was able to share a little about my research process and what I found in their archives as a part of this project. Similarly, the *Presbyterian Outlook* and its editor, Jill Duffield, graciously invited me to write a brief overview

of this project as a feature article for the magazine. Some of the material from the PHS blog post and the *Presbyterian Outlook* article may be replicated herein.

Thank you to the staff of the the Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archives at Lincoln University (PA), especially Sophia Sotilleo and Doris Hughes, for aiding my research there.

Thank you to Brenda Moore and the congregation of Second Presbyterian Church in West Chester, and to Don Lincoln and the congregation of Westminster Presbyterian Church in West Chester, for aiding my inquiry into Wilmore's West Chester period.

Thank you to my cousins Alice Hill and Peter Starr, and to Robert and Anne Stone, for hosting me on visits to Washington, D.C. Thank you especially to my Brown-Rayme cousins for hosting, feeding, transporting, and entertaining me on multiple occasions in the Philadelphia area. Thank you to the all the people I interviewed and corresponded with for this project, including, among others, Dorothea Murray, Robert Hanna, Anderson Porter, Robert B. Boell, Susan Tiernan, Oscar McCloud, and Richard Winchester.

I have been blessed beyond measure by the opportunity to get to know Dr. Gayraud Wilmore and his son, Jacques Wilmore, as a part of this project. They have welcomed, encouraged, and challenged me every step of the way, and provided valuable information that I could not have acquired elsewhere. Thank you, Dr. Wilmore, for sharing your life story with me - I am deeply grateful.

Thank you to the members of the various religious communities which have supported me during this project, and have nurtured me at other points in my life. This project has often brought these communities to mind and heart, reminding me of my aspiration to do this scholarly work for the benefit of a broader group of people than academics. This is especially true of

Davidson Presbyterian Church, my first (childhood) church family, black Presbyterians who taught me about Jesus even as they were fighting against and living with the consequences of redlining, school re-segregation, economic oppression, police violence, and the New Jim Crow.

Most importantly, thank you to my family. To my father-in-law, Steve, thank you for always being the first one (and often only one, aside from committee members) to read and comment on every draft and chapter of this project. To my own parents who have nurtured and encouraged me throughout life, including over the course of this project: Thank you for teaching me a love of reading and a passion for justice, and encouraging my interest in the subjects of race, religion, and history.

To my wife, Kara, thank you for being my dedicated partner in this work, pulling “second shift” to enable me to go on research trips and to create space for my writing process. You have listened to my ramblings about the project’s minutiae, journeyed with me through its high points and its low points, and provided helpful feedback on numerous occasions. You have reminded me to relax and take time off when appropriate, and at other times challenged me to get moving and finish this thing up.

My sons Huntington and Shaffer have also been partners in this process, brightening my days with their creativity and wonder. (Almost) two-year-old Shaffer has offered many delightful interruptions to my writing process, often in the form of his own bibliographical suggestions, carrying various works over to my desk and climbing up into my lap to request that I read them to him, undaunted by their apparent irrelevance to my project. To (almost) six-year-old Huntington: thank you for being my best cheerleader. He is skeptical that I will ever finish “my book,” but he knows that I have been working hard on it, as evidenced in his composition of a

new verse in the children's song, "The Wheels on the Bus," as, "The Daddy on the bus just tries to finish his dissertation, tries to finish his dissertation... all through the town!"

- Douglas H. Brown Clark, August 28, 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	xii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiii
INTRODUCTION	1
 Chapter	
1. Formation	26
Family and Early Years	26
Ancestry.....	26
A Proud Family Legacy of Church and Community Engagement	27
Dignity Amid Economic and Racial Oppression	30
Childhood in North Philadelphia	34
The Franklin-Honored Essayist from the Hood	37
McDowell Community Presbyterian Church	42
The New McDowell Church	42
“The North Philadelphia Civic League on its Knees”	47
Lee Ella Wilson Wilmore	51
Buffalo Soldier	52
A Senatorial Scholar at Lincoln	52
“The Breath of the Induction Officer on the Back of My Neck”	54
A Foxhole Conversion and a “Firm Decision for Ministry”	57
“Limping Past the Statue of Liberty”	59
Lincoln University	63
Back to School	63
Defending a Disrespectable Activist and Advocating for the Masses	65
Graduation and Seminary Study	73
Seminary Mentors	74
Networks: Civil Rights and Black Presbyterians	79
The Wilmore Brothers and “Operation Oxford”	82

2. Early Ministry and Scholarship	113
West Chester Pastorate and School Desegregation	113
Becoming a Pastor	113
School Desegregation	114
Conflicts with the Old Guard	124
Black Clergy Allies: The Council of the North and West	134
Trial Balloons in a “Turbulent Atmosphere of World-Changing Ideas and Energies”... 138	
A New Job and a New Home: The Student Christian Movement and Tanguy	
Homesteads	138
Christian Action	149
Social Action and <i>Social Progress</i>	152
Joining the SEA: Advocates for Incrementalism and Church Desegregation... 152	
White Reformist Partners in the SEA	158
Writing for <i>Social Progress</i>	163
Wilmore’s Writings on Race in <i>Social Progress</i>	163
Wilmore’s Writings on the Church and Social/Political Action in <i>Social</i>	
<i>Progress</i>	166
Christian Politics and Defending Radicals	174
Student and Teacher	179
Drew, Temple, and Pittsburgh	179
Secular Relevance	182
3. “Catching up with Dr. King”: The Commission on Religion and Race, 1963-65.....	231
Interracial Action Against Southern Injustices: Presbyterians in 1963	231
Putting the Church’s “Body and its Pocketbook Where its Mouth Was”: From	
Gradualism to the Commission on Religion and Race	231
The Creation of CORAR	233
Wilmore’s Selection as Executive Director of CORAR	235
The Moderate Integrationism of Early CORAR Under Wilmore’s Leadership..239	
“The New Negro and the Church”	241
The Early Work of CORAR: Northern White Presbyterians in Mississippi	250
CORAR Co-Workers: Bob Stone and Metz Rollins	259
Cracks in the Foundation: the March on Washington, “The Negro Revolt,” and the	
Confession of 1967	262
Generational Tensions at the March on Washington	262
“The Negro Revolt”: Linking Birmingham to Black Power	268
The Confession of 1967	274
From Selma to Watts: The Movement Expands Beyond the South	290
Selma and the Voting Rights Act	292
The Watts Rebellion	293
Turning North	301

4. Black Power, Black Caucuses, Black Theology, and “The White Problem,” 1966-68.....	321
Black Power and the Founding of the National Conference of Black Churchmen	321
A “Second Conversion”: Black Consciousness and Black Theology after Newark.....	329
A Rebellion and a Black Power Conference in Newark	329
The Church and the Urban Crisis	333
Changes in the Commission: Action, Militancy, and the North	335
Black Theology, the Black Church, and the Reformed Tradition	338
“A Kind of ‘Black Theology’ Aborning”	338
Black Theology, Black Power, and the Black Church	341
Black Theology and the Reformed Tradition	344
“The White Problem”: Responding to White Backlash	353
Defending Adam Clayton Powell	353
“The White Problem”	355
“Quiet, Worried Men”	357
A Solid Black Hyphen	359
5. The Black Manifesto and Reparations, 1969	373
Introducing the Manifesto	373
Forman at Riverside	373
Background	376
Early Manifesto Supporters	383
Black Clergy, Black Women, and the Manifesto	383
Early White Supporters of the Manifesto	390
Manifesto Opponents	392
Presbyterians and the Manifesto	399
Wilmore and Forman	400
Wilmore’s Early Support for the Manifesto	402
The “Liberation” of the Interchurch Center and Forman’s Invitation to Address the United Presbyterian General Assembly	403
Forman and his Latinx and Black Presbyterian Allies Before the Assembly ...	405
Outrage, Insults, Threats, and Guns in San Antonio	409
The Assembly’s Response to the Manifesto	411
<i>The Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto: Wilmore’s Defense of Forman’s Demands for Reparations</i>	415
Translating for Forman	416
Forman as a Prophet	417
Disruptive Tactics	420
White Presbyterian Responses after Wilmore’s <i>Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto</i>	424
Manifesto Supporters	424
Manifesto Opponents	426

Ernest Campbell and the Riverside Church	429
Aftermath: Two Long-Term Presbyterian Reparations Vehicles	434
The Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO)	436
Self-Development of People	437
6. The End of an Era: Defending Angela Davis and Leaving CORAR.....	451
Background for Davis' Arrest and Trial	452
United Presbyterians' Intervention in the Davis Case	456
The General Assembly	462
White Backlash	467
Black Presbyterian Responses to the Backlash	471
Gender in the Davis Incident	478
Aftermath: Polarization, Restructuring, and "Fire Fights"	486
Epilogue	507
REFERENCES	527

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Gayraud S. Wilmore, 1960s	4
2. McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1895	41
3. Edler G. Hawkins, 1948	45
4. Gayraud Wilmore as <i>Lincolnian</i> editor, 1947	68
5. Gayraud Wilmore as Vice-President of Delta Rho Debating Society, 1947	68
6. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., 1947	71
7. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., 1947	72
8. Anderson E. Porter and Robert B. Boell at Porter’s ordination service, 1960	131
9. Gayraud Wilmore, interviewed on his work with the SCM, 1955	147
10. Gayraud Wilmore’s introduction as a new SEA staffer, November 1955 (close-up) ...	162
11. Gayraud Wilmore’s introduction as a new SEA staffer, November 1955.....	162
12. Hosea L. Williams, Gayraud S. Wilmore, Andrew Young, Ralph David Abernathy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and Bayard Rustin, 1963	249
13. Participants in the Hattiesburg Ministers’ Project protesting in that city, 1964	255
14. CORAR voter registration promotion leaflet, 1964	256
15. Eugene Carson Blake, escorted into a police van while protesting segregated facilities at the Gwynn Oak Amusement Park, Baltimore, Maryland, July 4, 1963	266
16. Christian Action Conference brochure, <i>The Church and Civil Rights</i> , 1965	299
17. Speakers in support of the Black Manifesto, Black Power, and Brown Power at the 1969 UPCUSA General Assembly, San Antonio, Texas	408
18. James Forman, Gayraud Wilmore, and Oscar McCloud, ca. 1970	482

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
AME Zion	African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
BCE	Board of Christian Education (PCUSA and UPCUSA)
BEDC	Black Economic Development Conference, “bed-cee” (formerly NBEDC)
BNM	Board of National Missions (PCUSA and UPCUSA)
BPP	Black Panther Party (formerly Black Panther Party for Self-Defense)
BPPP	Black Panther Political Party (later L.A. SNCC)
BPU	Black Presbyterians United
C67	Confession of 1967
CME	Christian (formerly “Colored”) Methodist Episcopal Church
COCAR	Council on Church and Race (UPCUSA - formerly CORAR)
COFO	Congress of Federated Organizations
CORAR	Commission on Religion and Race (UPCUSA - later COCAR)
CORE	Congress of Racial Equality
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
EFLA	Emergency Fund for Legal Aid (UPCUSA)
ERC	Enlisted Reserve Corps
G.A.	General Assembly (PCUSA, UPCUSA, and PC (US))
HBCU	Historically Black College(s) and/or University(ies)
HMP	Hattiesburg Ministers’ Project
IFCO	Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization
ITC	Interdenominational Theological Center
JCSTS	Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary
L.A. SNCC	Los Angeles Chapter of SNCC (formerly BPPP)
MOW	March on Washington

NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NBEDC	National Black Economic Development Conference (later BEDC)
NBPC	National Black Presbyterian Caucus
NCBC (NCNC)	National Conference (formerly “Committee”) of Black (formerly “Negro”) Churchmen (later “Christians”)
NCC	National Council of Churches
NCC’s CORAR	Commission on Religion and Race of the NCC
NCOSDOP	National (later “Presbyterian”) Committee for the Self-Development of People, or simply “SDOP”
NPCL	North Philadelphia Civic League
NVDA	Nonviolent Direct Action
PC (USA)	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
PC (US)	Presbyterian Church in the United States
PEDCO	Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation
PIC	Presbyterian Interracial Council
PTS	Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
OECA	Office of Ethnic Church Affairs (Synod of the Golden Gate)
SCLC	Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SDOP	(National Committee for the) Self-Development of People
SEA	Division of Social Education and Action, BCE, PCUSA/UPCUSA
SNCC	Student Nonviolent (later “National”) Coordinating Committee, “snick”
UCC	United Church of Christ
UPCNA	United Presbyterian Church of North America
UPCUSA	United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
VRA	Voting Rights Act of 1965
YCL	Young Communist League
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association

INTRODUCTION

Black Power in a Majority-White Church

On May 4, 1969, James Forman, a Civil Rights and Black Power leader who had worked with both the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panthers, made a dramatic, unannounced visit to Sunday worship at the most prominent church in American mainline Protestantism, sometimes referred to as the “Protestant cathedral,” the Riverside Church in New York City.¹ Over the protests of its pastor, Ernest T. Campbell, Forman then presented “the Black Manifesto,” demanding that the nation’s white churches and synagogues pay \$500 million in reparations due to their past complicity in slavery and discrimination. In subsequent months, Forman and his associates made similar in-person demands at the national headquarters of many majority-white denominations and religious institutions.

White Protestants were already well aware of, and unenthusiastic about, the now three-year-old “Black Power” phase of the “Civil Rights” or “Black Freedom Movement.”² However, through the Manifesto, racial justice activists had taken Black Power one step further, challenging not only the structures of the American nation, but also those of its religious institutions.

Many white clergy and laypeople were shocked by Forman’s demands and confrontational style. Episcopal priest Robert Webb thought the Manifesto “filled with hatred and bitterness, . . . tinged with philosophies alien to the American ideal,” and fellow priest Robert L. Howell criticized supporters of the Manifesto for not “repudiating talk of violent revolution.”³

Presbyterian minister Malcolm P. Calhoun objected to Forman's "fiery rhetoric" and anti-American statements.⁴ White mainline Christians were even more surprised to discover that many black clergy, even colleagues in their own majority-white denominations, strongly supported Forman and the idea of reparations.⁵ White Presbyterians, having thought themselves, by the late 1960s, as at the forefront of progress toward racial justice, were especially stung when black Presbyterians endorsed the Manifesto. They could not understand how their black fellow clergymen, who had only a few years previously sought to enlist white Christians in the fight for equality, could now endorse a document characterizing the white church not as a partner, but as an enemy of racial justice.

Gayraud S. Wilmore

One of these black ministers, the Rev. Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, was the top racial justice official in the majority-white denomination to which Ernest Campbell belonged, The United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA).⁶ At the time, the UPCUSA had 2.5 million members, and was one of the wealthiest and most politically influential Christian denominations in the United States. Wilmore quickly penned an essay in support of the Manifesto, entitled *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, which the denomination disseminated widely, though it stopped just short of providing an official endorsement.⁷ In this essay, Wilmore wrote that he understood that many Presbyterians might not be able to accept Forman's radical ideological underpinnings, or his disruptive activist tactics. Nevertheless, Wilmore argued vigorously and eloquently that the Manifesto and its reparations demands were fully in keeping with the words of the Bible and the tenets of Christian theology. Wilmore was no "outside agitator" or marginal

figure in his denomination, rather he was a symbol of its racial progressivism. In 1963 the UPCUSA had appointed him as executive director of a newly created “Commission on Religion and Race” (CORAR), in what seemed at the time like a burst of courageous, optimistic support for racial justice. Leading white United Presbyterians had felt embarrassed in 1963 at their denomination’s lack of engagement with racial justice issues, but by 1969 they were proud of their work on those issues, and of Wilmore’s leadership.

A Solid Black Hyphen

Indeed Wilmore had continued to support his denomination and to serve in his position, but since 1966 he had also become a fervent advocate for Black Power, having co-founded the “National Conference of Black Churchmen” (NCBC), the largest organization of pro-Black Power black clergy, only weeks after the 1966 “Black Power” slogan first went “viral.” In 1968 an interviewer noted that others had called Wilmore a “hyphen” between black and white communities, but she added, “the figure is apt if you assume a solid black hyphen, for there is no doubt about Wilmore’s blackness.”⁸ Black Power, sometimes characterized as a revolt of young radicals against the incrementalist style of older, moderate black clergy, now not only treated religious institutions as a target, but had also earned the support of a growing cadre of militant black Christian ministers, and was on the cusp of inaugurating a new theological movement in the form of Black Theology. White mainline Protestants, proud of their racial progressivism, expected Wilmore and other black clergy in denominational leadership to be merely “hyphens” - friendly, irenic, appreciative of white benevolence, and committed to racial reconciliation. They were not prepared for the emergence of the “solid blackness” of those hyphens.



Figure 1. Gayraud S. Wilmore, 1960s.

“Gayraud S. Wilmore,” 1968, United Presbyterian Church in the USA Commission on Religion and Race - Archives, RG 301.9, Box 14, Folder 61, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

This project examines how a figure like Wilmore, entrusted by a wealthy, moderate, majority-white denomination with its gradualist, reformist racial justice agenda, could become radicalized, yet retain his denominational post and stay in close conversation with white mainline Protestants.⁹ This mystery is a microcosm of the broader question of how black clergy in majority-white denominations became supporters of Black Power. A related paradox requiring explanation is how mainline Protestants, in Wilmore's denomination and in general, moved from a brief surge of support for racial justice activism in the early 1960s, to a strong backlash against it in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Answering each of these questions will yield a more complete picture of the role religion played in the movement for Black Power.

In this dissertation, I analyze the life and work of Gayraud Wilmore, as a central figure in a microhistory of religion and Black Power, using his story as a lens through which to understand the connections and tensions between Black Power and majority-white, mainline churches in the late 1960s. Wilmore has led a long, varied, and distinguished career of ministry, activism, and scholarship. He is well-known for his scholarly contributions in African American religious studies, especially in the founding and development of the academic field of Black Theology, an endeavor which became his primary focus beginning in 1972.¹⁰ He has also been a key figure in the development of the field of Africana religious studies, including through interactions with scholars like John Mbiti, Maulana Karenga, and Molefi Asante. However, historians have paid little attention to his pre-1972 activities. From 1950 to 1972 Wilmore engaged in a vocation of racial justice activism, based in Philadelphia and New York while traveling throughout the nation. He was a key figure in the genesis of the Civil Rights Movement, especially among Presbyterians. In the 1960s he joined Eugene Carson Blake and Edler G. Hawkins as the most

prominent Presbyterian advocates for the movement. In the mid-1960s he, Benjamin Payton, and J. Metz Rollins founded the largest organization of pro-Black Power black clergy, and in the late 1960s he joined James H. Cone and J. Deotis Roberts as a founder of the academic field of Black Theology. Despite his importance as an historical figure, and his substantial record of publications, currently there exists no published treatment of his life longer than fifteen pages.¹¹ The lack of historical scholarship on Wilmore constitutes a major oversight. This project fills three major historiographical lacunae: 1) original scholarship on Wilmore as a leading figure in Civil Rights history, 2) use of Wilmore's story to expand and re-focus the small but growing literature on religion and Black Power, and 3) a new way to frame the history of mainline Protestants and the Civil Rights Movement. This research agenda is especially pressing in a contemporary era whose racial justice activism, white racist backlash, and religious change and divisions recall similar circumstances fifty years ago.

Wilmore was a key player in three events crucial to the history of both the Civil Rights Movement and postwar mainline Protestantism. The first of these events was the 1963 creation by the United Presbyterian Church of the Wilmore-led "Commission on Religion and Race" (CORAR). This was an earnest, though moderate, incrementalist effort by a large, powerful, majority-white denomination to support racial justice or, in its words, to "catch up with Dr. King."¹² The second event was the 1969 promulgation of the Black Manifesto and its demands for reparations. Wilmore took center stage in this controversy by serving as an interpreter or mediator between more strident Black Power radicals and white Protestant leaders, an incident which led Wilmore to craft his best-known monograph, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (1972).¹³ The third event was the 1971 decision by Wilmore's Commission to

provide funds for the legal defense of communist Black Power radical Angela Y. Davis, a decision which created a firestorm in his denomination and led to Wilmore's departure from CORAR and turn to academic writing and teaching for the remainder of his career. In this project, I investigate the background behind and the aftermath of these three events, using Wilmore's story to tie them together as a microhistory of religion and Black Power.

Wilmore spent the entirety of the 1960s (and most of the 1950s) working in majority-white religious institutions, yet in the late 1960s he became a staunch backer of Black Power radicalism, even as he remained affiliated with such institutions.¹⁴ The most challenging question about his life has to do with this paradox, with how he navigated within and identified with two distinct worlds: that of the "white moderate" of the clergy and laity of the Presbyterian Church, and that of the "black radical" of Black Power and Black Theology organizations and movements. The Black Manifesto crisis brought these two worlds crashing together in an especially dramatic way, as black radicals demanded reparations from white churches. Wilmore joined in these demands, yet he did so using not the language of Marxism, but that of scripture and theology. Bryant George, an associate who has written a brief biographical essay on Wilmore, called him a "prophet" and a "Firebell in the Night," which "breaks into your sleep, rudely jolts you into a nervous wakefulness, and immediately puts you on your feet."¹⁵ But if Wilmore was the "prophet" or "firebell" who stirred others to action, who or what stirred *him* to action? Did Wilmore become more radical over time, or did he engage in "masking," posing initially as a moderate and only later revealing his theology and politics to be more radical? Did "double-consciousness" or a kind of "deep ambivalence" allow him to navigate the connections between the white church and Black Power, as Wilmore himself has suggested?¹⁶ Each of these

three explanations (radicalization, masking, and double consciousness) has some truth to it, but each answer is inadequate, constituting an effort to fit Wilmore, and by extension black Presbyterians, into a widely recognizable box. Instead of fitting Wilmore into one of these well-worn models, I propose a new image as a way to best categorize what is, of course, a complicated story.

In the 1950s-60s, Wilmore was a “solid black hyphen,” a link between black and white Christians, but a link which was firmly tied to his blackness, to his roots in the African American church and community of the slums of north Philadelphia, and in the broader African diaspora. Wilmore has indeed maintained parallel commitments. He has nurtured strong relationships with white individuals and held powerful commitments to Presbyterianism, interracialism, and ecumenism. At the same time his deepest drive has been to remember where he came from, and thus to represent the needs and dreams of the African American poor of the the cities of the American North and West, in the context of a worldwide struggle for the liberation of persons of African descent.¹⁷

I supplement the “solid black hyphen” image with a typology for African American religious leadership and biblical interpretation, developed by Hebrew Bible scholar Herbert Marbury. Marbury divides certain African American interpreters of Exodus into quiet, masked, behind-the-scenes, reformist “pillars of cloud,” and openly radical, defiant, “pillars of fire,” based on the Exodus story in which God leads the Israelites through the desert as “a pillar of cloud by day” and “a pillar of fire by night.”¹⁸ Marbury classifies Absalom Jones, Frances E. W. Harper, and Martin Luther King, Jr. as “pillars of cloud,” who “take up the mask in forms such as mastery of civic and social behaviors,” who “exemplified model citizenship, moral virtue, and

intellectual acumen,” and who “*fit* their lives within the contemporaneous social arrangements so that the mask showed congruity with the social world.”¹⁹ By contrast,

... pillars of fire reject the mask in order to advertise themselves. They are unwilling to fit within the unjust social arrangements. In fact, their politics proceed by advertising their unwillingness to fit as both a source of resistance and a show of power.²⁰

Marbury classifies David Walker and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. as “pillars of fire,” who “made their emancipatory intentions explicit,” whose “capital accrued not from *fitting in*, and enacting performances of congruence, but from remaining steadfastly *out of place*.”²¹ I argue that Gayraud Wilmore began his career as a “pillar of cloud,” a behind-the-scenes leader who often used his “mastery of civic and social behaviors,” and his “model citizenship, moral virtue, and intellectual acumen” in order to support other more overtly radical, defiant “pillars of fire,” people like James Forman and Angela Davis who “rejected the mask,” refused to conform, were more explicit in their politics, and “remained steadfastly *out of place*.” In this dissertation, I use “pillar of cloud” as a companion image to “hyphen,” and “pillar of fire” as a companion to the “solid black” character of this particular “hyphen.” The work traces Wilmore’s gradual transition over time, with a key turning point in the 1965-67 period, from his status as a “hyphen” and “pillar of cloud,” to his new status as a “solid black hyphen” and a “pillar of fire.”

Wilmore’s stance in relation to white institutions is of course more complicated than any image or metaphor. There are five other major elements of this stance, which fit under the “solid black hyphen” image but require further explanation. Two are his strategic considerations and the ecclesiastical structure of black Presbyterianism, and the other three are changes which took place in his life and in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s which radicalized him further.

Meaningful personal relationships with white individuals were indeed a major part of Wilmore's life, and certain aspects of his theology did call him to recognize the value of people of all races. However, his engagement with majority-white white institutions has been largely strategic. After his retirement, Wilmore claimed that the reason he had chosen ordination in a majority-white denomination after the Second World War, despite his unhappy experience serving under racist white officers in that war, even as they were fighting against the racism of Hitler's regime, was because, "I made up my mind to continue the fight against bigotry and racism at one of the sources of the sickness, in the belly of the white, upper-middle-class church into which I had been baptized."²² He added that "white racism has dogged me for as long as I can remember. And while I dislike talking or writing about it, I must."²³ A 1973 biographical sketch of Wilmore, edited by one of his college professors but likely reflecting significant input from Wilmore himself, similarly said, "It is not surprising, therefore, that the 'white problem' became the major issue and the point of greatest concern in [Wilmore's] reflections upon the structures in American society and in his passion for racial justice."²⁴ Wilmore wanted to be where the action was, taking the fight to the enemy. He wanted to work his way into a position where he could exercise the power of the white church on behalf of black people. He wanted to address "the white problem," and how better to do that than among white people? Hence Wilmore felt drawn to white institutions, both as a conscious strategy to change them, and, perhaps, due to a more unconscious sense of call, rooted in his baptism as a Presbyterian and in his war experiences. Like Jonah, the Old Testament prophet whose flight from a God-given mission to confront a heartless people lands him in the belly of a fish (from which the phrase

“belly of the beast” derives), Wilmore was convicted and compelled to turn again to that people, to force white Christians to respond to African Americans’ demands for justice.²⁵

Wilmore does not seem to have done much active, intentional “masking” in the sense of hiding his commitments from white people, but the ecclesial structures particular to black Presbyterianism performed some “masking” functions for him, rendering him a seemingly apolitical, gentle, moderate, “pillar of cloud” in the 1950s and early 1960s. Black northern Presbyterianism, particularly in the 1940s-60s era of his early career, while a dynamic and powerful constituency of both the black church in general and of Wilmore’s denomination, was a small, tightly-knit club, primarily concentrated in the mid-Atlantic region between New York City, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C., with Philadelphia at its center.²⁶ It is only slightly hyperbolic to say that even in Wilmore’s early career, he knew all the black northern Presbyterian ministers, and they all knew him. Black northern Presbyterians held annual meetings, and the rolls of speakers, leaders, and attendees are full of Philadelphia pastors, Wilmore’s seminary professors, and other Wilmore associates. White Presbyterians, however, knew Wilmore not from this context, but as a quiet, reflective academic, the first African American professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, the lone African American in the Board of Christian Education’s Division of Social Education and Action, and the lone African American on the denomination’s committee to craft a new credal document. They saw him as a thinker, not an activist, and one who had proven that he could be a part of an otherwise all-white faculty or committee without making a stir. While it is not clear who exactly tapped Wilmore to head the Commission on Religion and Race, his selection would have satisfied white Presbyterians because of his non-threatening,

apolitical, academic reputation, and would have also satisfied black Presbyterians who knew him as one of their own, firmly committed to racial justice and equality.²⁷

Three changes in the Civil Rights Movement and Wilmore's engagement with it in the 1960s radicalized him further, shifting him to a more "solidly black" form of hyphenation, from a masked, seemingly moderate "pillar of cloud" to an overtly radical "pillar of fire." First, like other black Presbyterians, and African Americans working within white institutions in general, in the late 1950s and early 1960s he worked collaboratively with white allies for racial justice, harboring a somewhat naïve hope for progress through working with white people. Like others, his experiences of being marginalized, undermined, or serving as a token gradually accumulated, and he gravitated more toward closer alliances with black leaders. Second, also like many other African American Civil Rights activists, he was inspired by more radical elements often led by younger activists, by SNCC as the younger, more radical counterpart to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC, which was itself the younger, more radical counterpart to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or NAACP), by the militancy of Malcolm X or Malik Shabazz, and by the Black Power movement.

Third and most important of all was the shift in the regional focus of the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1950s and early 1960s, the movement focused on the American South, especially on its Jim Crow segregation system. But starting in the mid-1960s, the movement for racial justice shifted to a focus on non-southern cities. The U.S. Congress had passed the Civil and Voting Rights Acts, which were largely targeted at injustice in the South, and summers in the cities of the North and West were increasingly filled with insurrections, sometimes called "riots,"

of African Americans concerned about economic conditions and police violence. Wilmore, though he had spent plenty of time working in the South, had never felt as comfortable there as in the North (as few northern African Americans would have, especially after the 1955 lynching in Mississippi of Chicago teenager Emmett Till). Furthermore, he identified strongly with the plight of the urban black poor, including their turn toward more economic concerns. Like Esther, another biblical prophet, a member of an oppressed minority group who, having found her way into the halls of power, is able to use that power to save her people from genocide, Wilmore had come to his position of power, “for such a time as this.”²⁸

Relatedly, as the regional focus of the movement shifted, the white moderates, both among United Presbyterians and among non-southern white Americans in general, moved in the opposite direction. They had been open to and cautiously supportive of the early 1960s phase of the Civil Rights Movement, in part because such support cost them little. The movement’s focus was on, in their view, the backward practices of a racist, foreign Southland. However, when the movement entered into their own backyards and took on more overtly economic concerns, northern white moderates became less enthusiastic about racial justice. Wilmore, as he became increasingly inspired by Black Power as it led him to fully unmask as an unapologetically black “pillar of fire,” became even more disenchanted with his white allies as he watched them moving in the opposite direction. This increasing late-1960s divide between black activists and white moderates would become most evident in the Black Manifesto crisis.

The Manifesto crisis revealed Wilmore’s identity as a “solid black hyphen,” one who could tie both worlds together, and yet was always clear about the people he came from and for whom he sought to speak. His story reveals that Black Power was not simply a separatist

withdrawal into all-black spheres. Such withdrawal was certainly part of the movement, but Black Power was also about confrontation. It was about confronting white power and demanding justice. Black Power was not so much about cutting ties with white allies, as it was about turning to confront those allies, to force them to face their own complicity in white supremacy.

Methodology

This project fits within the genres of postwar American, African American, Africana, Civil Rights, and religious history. It integrates elements of intellectual, social, and political history, using the ideas and actions of a particular individual to explain his own intellectual, religious, social, and political contexts, exploring the mutual influence of events and ideas. One could classify this project as a partial biography, as through it I do narrate much of the life of an individual, and one of my intentions in doing so is to recover the story of that person as a pivotal thinker and activist in African American, American religious, and Civil Rights history. However, I approach it as microhistory, rather than biography. According to Jill Lepore, “traditional” biography explains “the singularity and significance of an individual’s life and his contribution to history,” highlighting that person as a causal agent.²⁹ On the other hand,

... microhistory is founded upon almost the opposite assumption: however singular a person’s life may be, the value of examining it lies not in its uniqueness, but in its exemplariness, in how that individual’s life serves as an allegory for broader issues affecting the culture as a whole.³⁰

While “traditional biographers” endeavor to “recapitulate a life story,” microhistorians, “even when they study a single person’s life... are keen to evoke a period, a *mentalité*, a problem,” “to discern... the broader contours of the social and cultural landscape.”³¹ A microhistorian “*may*

recapitulate the subject's entire life story, though that is not his primary purpose. The life story... is merely the means to an end - and that end is always explaining the culture," seeking to reveal something about this broader context.³²

Unlike the subjects of some microhistories, Wilmore's life is well-documented, and his influence has been far greater than the minimal secondary literature on him would imply. The singular aspects of his story are fascinating. While he is not well-known outside certain ecclesial and scholarly circles, his colleagues, students, and friends express deep appreciation for his personal and professional contributions to church and society. He is a person of moral gravitas and personal magnetism - the kind of person about whom one might write a "traditional" biography. However, the light his story can shed on the cultural contexts in which he has participated is even more compelling than his significance as a causal agent or superlative figure.

Contributions to Scholarship

This project will make a major contribution to the field of religion and Black Power and, more broadly, to that of religion and the Civil Rights Movement. Scholars of the latter such as Jacquelyn Dowd Hall have long striven to expand the scope of expert and public knowledge of this movement.³³ The still widely-believed myth of the movement holds that it was the brainchild of "respectable" black ministers in the South, especially Martin Luther King, Jr., whose inspirational speeches moved the consciences of legislators, enabling passage of integrationist laws, whereby the nation laid its imperfect racial past to rest. All of this supposedly took place from 1954-55 (Brown v. Board and the Montgomery Campaign) to 1964-65 (passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts). In recent years, scholars have expanded the time frame and variety of

individuals, motives, and strategies involved in the movement.³⁴ My dissertation also supports a long movement time frame, and adds another person to its pantheon.

Despite these advances, serious historiographical problems persist regarding the Black Power era, especially in relation to religion and Black Power. Historians who have written on religion and the Civil Rights Movement have tended to focus on religion in the early history of the movement, in the American South, and/or in connection with nonviolence and integration.³⁵ These historians have also addressed not “religion” in general but “Christianity” in particular. Black Power was a later, largely non-southern movement advocating self-defense and self-determination, and involving prominent non-Christians, therefore scholars have overlooked much of its religious history. Scholarship on Black Power typically has been left to secular historians, partly because scholars mistakenly equate radicalism with secularism, despite the role of Islam, African religions, and even Christianity in the Black Power Movement.³⁶ Fortunately, there are a few promising recent exceptions. Kerry Pimblott’s 2016 book on religion and Black Power focuses on a clergy-led community organization in 1969 Cairo, Illinois.³⁷ Matthew J. Cressler’s 2017 book examines black Catholicism in Chicago, putting black Catholics’ late 1960s embrace of Black Power at the center of Catholic involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.³⁸ David Cline’s 2017 book, while focused on the South, addresses how faith-based racial justice activism in a particular seminary-based field education program changed as the Civil Rights Movement entered its Black Power phase.³⁹ Pimblott’s, Cressler’s, and Cline’s books are microhistories, centered on an event, denomination, or program as a way to explain the broader relationship between religion and Black Power. Marcia Walker-McWilliams’ 2016 biography of Addie Wyatt, a Chicago-based labor and Civil Rights activist and minister, also carries the story

of religion and civil rights past the mid-1960s and above the Mason-Dixon line.⁴⁰ Shannen Dee Williams' forthcoming history of black Catholic nuns in the U.S. pays special attention to black women's exclusion from Black Power organizations and their creation of alternative groups, including the 1968 founding of the National Black Sisters Conference.⁴¹

Wilmore engaged in religious racial justice activism in the post-1965 Black Power era. A Philadelphia native, his racial justice work was based in Philadelphia and New York but involved travel throughout the nation, especially among non-southern urban areas. Wilmore and his associates, despite their religiosity, were skeptical of nonviolence and interracialism and supportive of self-defense, self-determination, and black consciousness. Wilmore is Christian, but was in conversation with Muslims, secularists, and others. Wilmore was a "respectable" black clergy activist in the early 1960s, and most popular and expert historical narratives would expect him to recoil at the "disrespectable," radical rise of Black Power.⁴² Yet he embraced Black Power, and did so without renouncing religion, even in a majority-white denomination. My emphases in this dissertation, therefore, are exactly what most historians of religion and the Civil Rights Movement have left out, and my project will help to transform the field accordingly. It supplements and critiques the cutting-edge work of Pimblott, Cressler, Cline, Walker-McWilliams, and Williams, and brings its own emphases on mainline Protestantism, Presbyterianism, Philadelphia and New York, and the particulars of the story of Gayraud Wilmore and the Commission on Religion and Race.

Scholarship on mainline Protestantism and the Civil Rights Movement is in better shape than that of religion and Black Power, but still leaves much to be desired. James Findlay, Jr.'s 1993 book is the best in this niche, but it is dated and describes the role of the National Council

of Churches (NCC) in the movement, leaving other figures and organizations unexamined.⁴³ David Cline's aforementioned 2017 book on the Student Interracial Ministry is an excellent contribution in this area, focusing again on a particular organization. Curtis Evans' forthcoming work on the Federal Council of Churches and race in the 1920s-40s is much anticipated, but centers on an earlier era.⁴⁴ Jill Gill carries the story of the NCC and social activism into the Black Power era, but her work is part of a general tendency in books about mainline Protestant activism in the late 1960s to focus on the war in Vietnam rather than on Black Power.⁴⁵ Other books discuss racial justice activism by particular white church leaders or within particular denominations over longer time frames.⁴⁶ Wilmore himself has written a few chapters and articles on the subject, but many of these are dated and/or incomplete accounts.⁴⁷ Two other book-length studies that explicitly examine United Presbyterians and Black Power have never been published.⁴⁸ Jennifer Harvey includes some historical work on the Black Manifesto in a 2014 book on white Christians and racial justice, but her work is primarily in social ethics rather than in history.⁴⁹ Like the story of religion and Black Power more broadly, much of the the story of mainline Protestantism and Black Power has yet to be written.

Mainline Protestant denominations are relatively minor players in contemporary American religion and politics. However, in the 1960s, they were the most powerful religious segment of American society, as documented by Douglas Brackenridge, William Hutchison, Gardiner Shattuck, and David Hollinger.⁵⁰ At the height of mainline influence, which coincided with the 1960s height of the Civil Rights Movement, Wilmore was *the* primary denominational official charged with pursuing racial justice and Civil Rights, for one of the largest, wealthiest, and most politically powerful Protestant denominations in the U.S. The denomination's power is

best exemplified in that its top official, Eugene Carson Blake, was selected to speak on behalf of “Protestantism” at the March On Washington (MOW), alongside representatives of Roman Catholicism, Judaism, labor unions, and Civil Rights groups.

David Hollinger reflects on the puzzle of the postwar rise and fall (beginning in the 1960s) of the power and popularity of mainline Protestantism, and urges historians to consider the surprising ways in which “ecumenical Protestantism” has continued to exercise greater socio-political influence than its membership and finances might suggest.⁵¹ My dissertation does just that, exploring the complicated story of postwar ecumenical Protestantism’s influence amid numerical decline by analyzing its relationship to Black Power. Furthermore, unlike most other works on mainline Protestantism and race, its central figure is both African American and an official in a mainline, majority-white denomination.

Scope and Chapters

The scope of this study spans chronologically from Wilmore’s 1930s-40s formation to his 1972 transition from full-time activism into scholarship and teaching, with special attention to the 1963-72 period. This project therefore fully spans the “long Civil Rights Movement,” from the 1920s-30s era of the “de-radicalization of the black church,”⁵² the New Deal, and the labor-related early roots of the movement, to the late 1960s and 1970s turn of white Americans and the federal government away from openness to racial justice reforms and toward religious and political conservatism.

The project consists of an introduction and six chapters. The first chapter includes Wilmore’s childhood, family, religious formation, military service, and education at Lincoln

University (1921-50). It ties together three contexts, highlighting the roles each of them played in the genesis of the Civil Rights Movement: the 1920s-30s social gospel black church in the Great Migration, black military service in World War II, and the role of Lincoln University and other HBCUs in the mid-Atlantic region, where Wilmore engaged in his first desegregation protests in the late 1940s, at the same time that Pauli Murray was doing the same at Howard University. The second chapter analyzes Wilmore's early career (1950-63), including leading a 1950 school desegregation campaign as a young pastor in suburban Philadelphia, pursuing campus ministry for the Student Christian Movement (SCM), living in an intentionally integrated community, and collaborating with a network of white and black Quaker anti-racist and antiwar activists. This chapter also describes the 1955 beginning of his work as one of the first black officials in national social justice and Civil Rights agencies in the UPCUSA, again in Philadelphia, as well as doctoral study at Drew and Temple Universities and a teaching stint at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. The third chapter relates the 1963 creation of CORAR and the initial phase of its work under Wilmore's leadership (1963-65), set within a more general analysis of mainline majority-white denominations' increased involvement in racial justice activism in the early 1960s. It also examines Wilmore's service on the committee which drafted what would become the Confession of 1967.

The fourth chapter discusses the transition of Wilmore and his CORAR and National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) associates from the more moderate, reformist impulses of early 1960s activism to the more radical structural critique of nation, church, and institutions in the Black Power era. This chapter (1966-68) probes Wilmore's founding of the NCBC, the contributions made by Wilmore and the NCBC to the Black Power movement and the genesis of

Black Theology, and Wilmore's work as a mediator and interpreter, a "solid black hyphen," between majority-white religious institutions like the UPCUSA and other radical black activists, such as the participants in the massive urban uprisings in places like Watts, Newark, and Detroit. The fifth chapter turns to similar mediating, interpretive work by Wilmore between white mainline Christians and James Forman. This chapter's discussion of the events surrounding the 1969 "Black Manifesto" and its reparations demands serves as the centerpiece of my dissertation. The fifth and final chapter details Wilmore's final years in denomination-based activism before his 1972 turn to academic scholarship. It focuses on CORAR's 1971 funding of Angela Davis' legal defense, the intense white backlash to that funding, and how Wilmore and CORAR dealt with the backlash.

This is the story of how Wilmore came to be a "solid black hyphen." He was not always such a figure. To fully understand his contributions to Civil Rights, Black Power, and Black Theology, we must first examine his formational years. Those years include his childhood church, military service, and formal education. However, as Wilmore would himself remember amid the rebellions in Watts, Detroit, and Newark in the 1960s, he was formed, prior to any other influences, as a child of a black family struggling to survive in the slums of Depression-era Philadelphia.

¹ Peter J. Paris et al, eds., *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), p. 1.

² Some scholars prefer the term “Black Freedom Movement” as an alternative to “Civil Rights Movement,” because the latter term wrongly minimizes the role of economic grievances in the movement. However, the former term has its own shortcomings, implicitly leaving the concerns of non-black people of color, especially Mexican Americans, out of the movement. I use “Civil Rights Movement” because it is the most popularly recognizable term for the movement. Gayraud Wilmore has advocated use of the terms “black revolt” or “black rebellion,” Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Recollections: The Black Revolt and the United Presbyterian Church, 1963-1973” (*The Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 85, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2007, pp. 57-69), p. 57.

³ “Balking Episcopal Parishes” (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969), p. 1306.

⁴ Malcolm Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand* (Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996), pp. 160-161.

⁵ Episcopal layman Perry Laukhuff of Connecticut provided some evidence for this sense of surprise, although he was reacting more to the fact that the mostly white leadership of his denomination was somewhat receptive to the Manifesto’s demands. He wrote to these leaders, saying, “to see grown men groveling is nauseating.... This is the kind of behavior which long ago took away from me any respect for the national leadership of the Church.” This comment also underscores some of the complex gender dynamics at play in the Black Power movement and white responses to it. Gardiner H. Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), p. 189.

⁶ Campbell was Presbyterian, but Riverside Church was and is an intentionally “interdenominational” church affiliated with the American Baptist Convention and the United Church of Christ. Paris, *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, pp. 2, 84.

⁷ The denomination’s Board of Missions (BNM) published Wilmore’s essay and sent it out in the Board’s regular mailing to churches. In a forward to the essay, BNM official David Ramage made it clear that the denomination did not officially endorse the essay. Yet the BNM clearly thought that it was worthwhile reading for all Presbyterians. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., *The Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto* (New York: United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1969), pp. 1, 3.

⁸ Janet Harbison, “The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.” (*Presbyterian Life*, September 1, 1968, pp. 7-9, 33), p. 8.

⁹ In this dissertation, the terms “moderate,” “gradualist,” and “reformist” are used interchangeably, as are the contrasting terms “radical,” and “immediatist.” The former terms indicate a commitment to promoting racial/social justice within institutions, often at a relatively slow pace, for reasons which could include strategy, loyalty to those institutions themselves, and/or a desire to prevent more drastic change. The latter terms indicate a commitment to promoting social/racial justice by criticizing the very roots of, working outside of, and/or seeking the abolition of such institutions themselves, often at a relatively rapid pace, for reasons which could include strategy, antipathy/disgust/mistrust of/toward such institutions, and/or a desire to make space for the success of more moderate activists (“If you don’t deal with them, you will have to deal with us!”). These terms are generalizations - many activists have moved back and forth between “moderate” and “radical,” or have fit the definitions of both at the same time.

¹⁰ Wilmore’s five monographs are *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), *Last Things First* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1983), and *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University, 2004). He and James H. Cone also edited *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979) and *Black Theology: A Documentary History: Volume II 1980-1992* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993). Wilmore has also written many book chapters and articles, and edited eleven other books.

¹¹ Bryant George, “A Firebell in the Night,” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*, ed. Eugene G. Turner (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999). Some of the other essays in this volume, collected in honor of Wilmore, also include biographical information.

¹² George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 1.

¹³ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.

¹⁴ See note 9, above, for definitions of terms like “radical” and “moderate.”

¹⁵ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 2.

¹⁶ Wilmore has connected his paradoxical role in the UPCUSA to “double-consciousness,” felt perhaps more strongly by black Presbyterians than by other African Americans. “Double-consciousness” came originally from W. E. B. Du Bois. Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, pp. 84-87; W. E. B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 5. “Deep ambivalence” came from a Vincent Harding claim that “the ideology of Blackness surely grows out of the deep ambivalence of American Negroes to the Christ we have encountered here” (in America). Wilmore modified Harding to say that this “deep ambivalence” “is not as much about Jesus Christ as it is about the white Christian church.” Wilmore then described Black Presbyterians’ “prevailing attitude” toward their denomination as one of “deep and persistent ambivalence,” having “oscillated back and forth between a desire for African American cultural identity and a desire for racial integration as an indispensable characteristic of any church that is truly Christian and visibly united.” Wilmore added that “ambiguity denotes uncertainty...,” whereas “ambivalence... denotes double-mindedness and conflict, but not necessarily confusion”; “ambivalence... tolerates the coexistence of opposite points of view without befuddlement and mystification. Within Black Presbyterianism these two positions - racial and cultural identity and racial integration - while frequently conflictual and contradictory, have actually reinforced each other on the way to liberation and reconciliation within one inclusive and united church.” Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Identity and Integration: Black Presbyterians and Their Allies in the Twentieth Century,” *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*, ed. Milton J. Coalter et al (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), pp. 109-110. Deborah Flemister Mullen called this ambivalence a “critical hermeneutical lens” for understanding black Presbyterian identity. Deborah Flemister Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ’s Name?: United Presbyterians and Racial Justice: “The Angela Davis Affair” 1967 to 1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Divinity School, 2003), pp. 96-98.

¹⁷ The American “North and West” is a set of terms frequently used by the subjects of this dissertation, and by the dissertation itself, to refer to the non-southern United States, in contrast to the U.S. states which permitted chattel slavery until the 1860s, and especially those states which formed the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War.

¹⁸ Herbert Robinson Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire: The Politics of Exodus in African American Biblical Interpretation* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), pp. 6-9; Exodus 13:21 (NRSV).

¹⁹ Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*, pp. 8-9.

²⁰ Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*, p. 9.

²¹ Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*, p. 9.

²² Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 268.

²³ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 268.

²⁴ Frank T. Wilson, ed., “Living Witnesses: Black Presbyterians in Ministry” (*Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 51, No. 4, Winter 1973, pp. 347-391), p. 384. “The White Problem” is also the title of a pro-Black Power 1969 pamphlet, initiated by UPCUSA staffers including J. Metz Rollins, which took white Protestants as its audience. Dieter T. Hessel and Everett L. Perry, eds., *The White Problem* (The United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, 1970).

²⁵ See Jonah 1-4, esp. Jonah 1:17 (NRSV).

²⁶ “Black northern Presbyterians” refers to black people in non-southern, and therefore non-segregated judicatories of the Presbyterian Church (USA), later known as the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA), in the mid-twentieth century. Almost all black Presbyterians in the United States at the time were part of the otherwise non-southern Presbyterian Church (USA). Most non-southern white Presbyterians were members of the Presbyterian Church (USA), while most southern white Presbyterians were members of a separate denomination. Therefore black Presbyterians in the South met in majority-black regional groupings. Black Presbyterians outside the South, because their regional meetings were majority-white, developed alternative organizations and events to bring together black (northern) Presbyterians. These dynamics are explained more fully in Chapter 2.

²⁷ J. Oscar McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²⁸ Esther 1-10, esp. Esther 4:14 (NRSV).

²⁹ Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography” (*The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1, June 2001, pp. 129-144), p. 133.

³⁰ Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much,” p. 133.

³¹ Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much,” p. 132-133.

³² Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much,” p. 133.

³³ Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past” (*The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4, March 1, 2005, pp. 1233-1263).

³⁴ For an expanded time frame and set of motives and strategies, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000); and Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). For an expanded set of leaders, see Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Dutton, 1993); Dennis C. Dickerson, *Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young, Jr.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998; Andrew Michael Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999); Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); and Rosalind Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁵ See, for example, Charles Marsh, *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Paul Harvey, *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Dennis C. Dickerson, *African American Preachers and Politics: The Careys of Chicago* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010); Stephen Haynes, *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Carter Dalton Lyon, *Sanctuaries of Segregation: The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2017). Marsh's book, despite its explicit regional and religious focus, does devote a chapter to Cleveland Sellers, a more radical, Black Power figure. Dickerson's book is one of the only ones in this list to discuss racial justice activism outside the South, but it, like most of the others, focuses largely on pre-1965 events.

³⁶ Works on Black Power which do not analyze its religious elements include Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); and Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016).

³⁷ Kerry Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016).

³⁸ Matthew J. Cressler, *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

³⁹ David F. Cline, *From Reconciliation to Revolution: The Student Interracial Ministry, Liberal Christianity, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

⁴⁰ Marcia Walker-McWilliams, *Reverend Addie Wyatt: Faith and the Fight for Labor, Gender, and Racial Equality* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016).

⁴¹ Shannen Dee Williams, *Subversive Habits: Black Nuns and the Struggle to Desegregate Catholic America after World War I*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

⁴² “Respectable” and “disrespectable” refer here to whether an advocate for social/racial justice chooses, for strategic or other reasons, to seek to conform to certain cultural beliefs, practices, and aesthetics. Those who seek such “respectability” often have done so in order to seem as “normal,” “upstanding,” or otherwise un-objectionable as possible to those in power, in order to prevent those in power from rejecting their demands for justice because of reasons other than those demands themselves. For example, white middle-class heterosexual Protestant men might object to activists’ dress, gender presentation, religiosity or lack thereof, or apparent socioeconomic class, and use such objections to reject demands for racial justice. “Disrespectable” activists decide that the costs of conformity outweigh any possible benefits.

⁴³ James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁴⁴ Curtis J. Evans, *A Theology of Brotherhood: The Federal Council of Churches and the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

⁴⁵ Jill K. Gill, *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011). Also, Michael B. Friedland’s 1998 book on “white clergy and the Civil Rights and antiwar movements, 1954-1973,” reveals the scholarly tendency to assume that the story of “religion and civil rights” pertains only to the pre-Black Power era. Its first five chapters address white clergy and the Civil Rights Movement between 1954 and 1965, while its last four chapters turn to white clergy and the antiwar movement between 1963 and 1973, thus implying either that the former movement ended in 1965, or that its white “religious” participants left racial justice to secular radicals and moved on to antiwar activism. Michael B. Friedland, *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

⁴⁶ See R. Douglas Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978); Joel L. Alvis, *Religion & Race: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994); and Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*.

⁴⁷ See, for example, Wilmore, “Identity and Integration”; Wilmore, “Recollections: The Black Revolt and the United Presbyterian Church, 1963-1973”; Chapter 9 of Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998); and Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations,” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*, ed. Eugene G. Turner (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999), pp. 97-110).

⁴⁸ Mullen, “Bound Together in Christ’s Name?”; and Amy L. Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows: The United Presbyterian Church and the Black Power Movement,” B.A. Thesis (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1985).

⁴⁹ Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014).

⁵⁰ See Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*; William R. Hutchison, ed., *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*; and David A. Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

⁵¹ Hollinger, *After Cloven Tongues of Fire*.

⁵² Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 163.

CHAPTER 1

FORMATION

Family and Early Years

Ancestry

Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. was born on December 20, 1921 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.¹ His parents were Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr. and Patricia Gardner Wilmore. Patricia was a native of Gloucester County, Virginia, and the Gardner family's roots are among African Americans enslaved on plantations in that area.² The Wilmore family traces its ancestry to an enslaved African American man, Godfrey Wilmore, and an Irish-born indentured servant, Mary Higgins, who traveled together across the Mason-Dixon line to found the town of Wilmore, Pennsylvania in the nineteenth century.³ While the link between this Wilmore-Higgins family and Gayraud Wilmore is unproven, the story of the former is well established. Godfrey Wilmore came from Harford County, Maryland.⁴ Given his literacy, he may have served as a valet, house slave, or bookkeeper.⁵ He saved enough money through extra work to buy freedom for himself and his wife, Mary Higgins.⁶ The family moved to Cumberland, Maryland, and then to what is now Wilmore, Pennsylvania, in Cambria County, in 1805, which became one of only five communities in the state to be founded by African Americans.⁷ Godfrey Wilmore was a teacher and built a saw mill in the community, and the family's presence drew other African Americans, including some who had fled slavery.⁸ Wilmore, previously a Baptist, converted to his wife's Roman Catholicism, in part due to "sincere conversations about religion" with an itinerant Russian-born priest and missionary.⁹ Wilmore and Higgins' son-in-law helped build the local

Catholic church in the 1850s.¹⁰ Outsiders called the town “Guinea,” a derogatory reference to the inter-racial heritage of its residents, while the residents long insisted on the name “Jefferson,” though they later settled on “Wilmore.”¹¹

Among other reasons for believing himself descended from this family, Gayraud Wilmore, Jr. noted that his father, unlike many of their African American neighbors in 1930s Philadelphia, was a native of that city, rather than a migrant from the South. Wilmore, Jr. also recalled being sent by his mother, as a child, to take food to a white cousin in Philadelphia, Mary Anne, perhaps a relative of Mary Higgins Wilmore. Wilmore, Jr. said that his father told the family little about his own ancestry, perhaps due to shame in being descended from an inter-racial union.¹² By contrast, Wilmore, Jr. has claimed this story as his own, suggesting that he takes pride in being a descendant of people who were enslaved, who worked and fought for their freedom, who were able to form a family despite racial differences and to found a historic, independent community of African Americans, and who embraced religion, even a form of religion unusual among African Americans, as a part of their identity. It also reveals Wilmore, Jr.’s self-understanding as both a person committed to the freedom of his fellow African Americans, and as a person willing to nurture relationships with white people of good will.

A Proud Family Legacy of Church and Community Engagement

Wilmore, Jr. was the child of a family proud of its service to nation, church, and community, especially in the form of his father’s public engagements. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., a Philadelphia native, was a veteran of the first World War, a Private First Class in the 369th Infantry, the New York National Guard, a celebrated regiment known as the “Harlem

Hellfighters.”¹³ The Hellfighters fought in France under French leadership, and every member of the regiment was decorated with the “Croix de Guerre.” After the war, Wilmore, Sr. founded the first black American Legion Post in Pennsylvania, Philadelphia’s “Crispus Attucks Post 151,” named for the African American martyr of the Boston Massacre.¹⁴ Wilmore, Sr. named one of his sons “Jacques” due to his time in France, including his experience of a more welcoming, less prejudiced attitude toward African Americans among French people.¹⁵

Wilmore, Sr. was a pillar of his community. He was a leader in local party politics, community organizations, and Scouting, and, although not a clergyman, a founder of the McDowell Community Presbyterian Church.¹⁶ He was involved in the Armstrong Association, a community organization which later became an affiliate of the National Urban League, as well as the NAACP.¹⁷ He was a Committeeman for the 29th Ward of the city’s Democratic Party, an officer of the Prince Hall Masons and of the O.V. Catto Elks Lodge, a founder of a local “block club” organization, and a founder of several Boy Scout troops, receiving Scouting’s prestigious “Silver Beaver Award” for this service.¹⁸ In the early 1930s, Wilmore, Sr., along with a dentist named John K. Rice, formed a community organization called the “North Philadelphia Civic League” (NPCL), which prioritized “improving living conditions in the black ghetto,” and fighting “police brutality, slum lords and rent gougers, and a variety of other sins....,” and was engaged in “open warfare for good government, better schools, and decent life and livelihood” in North Philadelphia.¹⁹ Wilmore, Sr. was a supporter of black nationalist Marcus Garvey.²⁰ Wilmore, Jr. described his father as a “race man,” “motivated by black consciousness” and “race solidarity,” who “in the 1930s and 1940s... challenged all forms of racial prejudice and discrimination, reminding the powers in City Hall that he had fought in France ‘to make the

world safe for democracy.”²¹ He “was known to be one of the most intelligent and articulate Black men in North Philadelphia.”²²

Wilmore, Sr. took a particular interest in young people, both in the church and the community.²³ This interest took the form of youth programming by many of the organizations with which he was affiliated. One such effort by Wilmore, Sr. and the other men with whom he often collaborated was the sponsorship of “drill teams and drum-and-bugle corps that participated in every patriotic holiday.”²⁴ Wilmore, Jr. recalled,

After all, these men were veterans of the First World War. They seized every excuse to put on a uniform, to dress us boys in white ducks and white shirts so we could join them in parades down Broad Street or Ridge Avenue with flags flying and bugles echoing through the silent office buildings.²⁵

Wilmore, Sr.’s dedication to Scouting organizations may also have been motivated by Scouting’s sometimes militaristic style.

Wilmore, Jr. cited his father’s influence as central in his own early religious formation, especially in observing his father’s extensive involvement in church and community activities.²⁶ He called his father his “first teacher of religion,” and said, “before I understood the meaning of the Fatherhood of God, I experienced the fatherhood of a small black man, five foot, five inches tall and about 120 pounds, who was my earthly father....”²⁷ He described his father as “an indefatigable institution builder” who saw community organization, service, and politics as “the highest of callings,” and whose “world was anchored in four clusters of basic institutions”: familial, civic/political, social, and religious.²⁸ Wilmore, Jr. sought to follow his father’s example, to become involved in those same kinds of institutions, in which he himself eventually “discovered my own place and my own life’s passion.”²⁹ Watching his father’s activities, he

learned “the privileges and responsibilities of living in God’s world,” and later noted, “My manhood began with this enlightenment.”³⁰

Dignity Amid Economic and Racial Oppression

While the proud example of his father as a religious, political, and community leader was powerful, there were other, less successful aspects of his father’s life which were even more formative for the younger Wilmore, namely his economic struggles. Wilmore, Sr., a real estate entrepreneur, lost his business in the 1929 Wall Street crash, which forced the family to move into a smaller house.³¹ The elder Wilmore sold apples, served as an office clerk, and was unemployed for long stretches of the Great Depression.³² The family struggled to pay Wilmore, Jr.’s college tuition and fees at Lincoln University in the 1940s, often making late or installment payments, despite Wilmore, Jr.’s additional support through a scholarship, financial aid, and work-study. In one of many such communications with Lincoln’s business manager, Wilmore, Sr. said of his son, “We are trying to help him all we can, we have two other boys to consider and the burden is heavy considering the amount of my earnings.”³³ Wilmore, Sr. eventually did find stable employment, working from the early 1940s until his 1962 retirement with the U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot.³⁴

The family’s economic insecurity was closely tied to racial inequality. A 1973 biographical sketch of Wilmore, Jr., in a collection edited by one of Wilmore’s college professors, Frank T. Wilson, Sr., and likely reflecting significant input from Wilmore himself, reported that his “search for purpose and meaning in human history” began “in the thwarted and constricted existence of black peoples in the ghettos of Philadelphia.”³⁵ The sketch added,

The Wilmore family... was familiar with, though not totally hardened by the various manifestations of racism, with all its attendant iniquities of hostility, discrimination, economic injustice, political exploitation and legal oppression. Gay saw emasculating effects of these forces upon the efforts of his father in business, in general employment and in his struggle to maintain the image of dignity and self-respect as head of the family. To all of this, the oldest son in the family reacted with almost vehement disgust and resentment.³⁶

The sketch also said that this resentment led Wilmore, Jr. to a vocation of seeking racial justice by trying to address “the white problem.”³⁷

Wilmore, Jr. also wrote about the intersections of prejudice, oppression, and dignity in his father’s life. He said that in his “father’s world,” “black men were supposed to be strong, courageous, and dignified,” and that such traits came from God:³⁸

I know now why dignity was so important in my father’s world. It was because the white world tried to deny black men their worth. As a small boy I was always impressed that my father and his friends customarily called one another Mister. Instead of using first names they addressed each other for a long time as Mr. Allen or Mr. Cherry or Mr. Jones. Somewhere along the way I learned that this was because white men showed them little respect and, on the job, either called them by their first names or simply ‘boy.’ At work they could do little about it. But when they spoke to one another at home they repaired their wounded dignity and manhood by using the formality of Mr., a title of respect and prestige, attributes they knew they deserved and that one day the white man would be bound to give them. Dad was a little man, you might even say a shrimp of a man, but like some small poodles he thought of himself as a big dog and didn’t hesitate to take on somebody twice his size when it came to defending his manhood.³⁹

Once, a white insurance agent visited the Wilmore home to collect a premium and refused to remove his hat “after being repeatedly asked to show my mother proper respect when he entered the house.”⁴⁰ Wilmore, Jr. said of his 5’5” father, “I never saw my small father look so tall and fierce that day as he encountered that man and told him flat out, ‘If you don’t take that hat off right now, I’m going to knock it off and throw both you and your hat into the street!’”⁴¹ The agent “snatched his hat right off and never wore it again when he crossed the threshold.”⁴² This

incident reveals Wilmore, Jr.'s intense pride in his father, and his resentment from a young age of the lack of respect and dignity afforded to both of his parents by white people, a disrespect which was closely tied to economic oppression, as well as to gender.

Wilmore, Jr.'s father taught him that "we are all equal and commanded to deal with one another with truth, righteousness, and justice."⁴³ The example of his father's Christian faith showed Wilmore, Jr. that "no one can permanently rob us of our manhood and our Godgiven right to life, liberty, and all the good things of this world that are in it for all of us," and that "brothers in the faith need to stand together against all who would deprive and dehumanize men, women, and children of whatever race, class, or nationality."⁴⁴ His father also taught him that "we must constantly be organizing our communities and mobilizing our resources, and there is nothing we need fear," because of God's sovereignty.⁴⁵ According to Wilmore, Jr., his father's teaching him "about this being a world in which God is the sovereign over all men and nations" had a major influence on his eventual decision pursue ministry as a vocation.⁴⁶

The Wilmore family's insistence on respect and dignity was not only racial, it was also gendered, as is already clear with reference to Wilmore, Sr.'s "manhood" and "emasculatation" and the respect the insurance agent owed to Mrs. Wilmore. This gendered dignity was closely tied to the Wilmore parents' employment. Patricia Gardner Wilmore, a descendant of enslaved African Americans from Virginia, was a domestic worker, cooking and doing laundry for white families in the Philadelphia area.⁴⁷ Decades later, when the Black Power movement foregrounded the economic concerns of the African American urban poor, Wilmore would refer to these experiences, charging that those unfamiliar with such communities, including Civil Rights leaders from the South,

... do not know what it is to face policemen every night.... They don't know what it is to fight rats all day, to have to sit up in the bed with a pair of shoes to throw at them.... They don't know what it is to be literally emasculated by your wife who works when you can't work, who is able to earn something... in a white suburban kitchen. They do not know what it is to have their dignity taken away from them by the condition of the American Negro family in the deepest heart of the ghettos of the North and West.⁴⁸

Wilmore's formative years thus passed amid a context of oppression along lines of race and class. His formation also reflected the gendered oppression of black women who, in order to provide for their own families, had to spend much of their days sustaining white families through domestic labor, an occupation which many found humiliating, and which made them prone to various kinds of exploitation. In that same period, Edler G. Hawkins, the young pastor of a large African American Presbyterian congregation in the Bronx, was embroiled in a fight to eliminate what was known as the "Bronx Slave Market," where black women waited to be picked up by white families for domestic work.⁴⁹ Hawkins would later become the first African American moderator of any American Presbyterian denomination, and a mentor to Wilmore.⁵⁰ Wilmore's story also revealed the ways in which men in that context felt humiliated when they were not able to provide for their families. This humiliation was exacerbated by the fact that their wives had to, and were able to, provide for their families in the husbands' supposed place. Such men longed to give their wives the opportunity to serve in "traditional" homemaker roles, but male unemployment rendered this impossible.⁵¹

Wilmore, Jr. thus felt pride in his father's communal leadership and assertion of his dignity in the face of intersectional, multivalent oppression, gratitude for the sacrifices of both of his parents in providing for the family as best they could, and perhaps shame at the family's difficulties. The Philadelphia Wilmore family, like the formerly enslaved Gardner family,

continued to face economic and racial oppression, serving white families in their homes. Like the family of Godfrey Wilmore and Mary Higgins, the Philadelphia Wilmores took great pride in a patriarch who had fought for freedom through community leadership and economic entrepreneurship (and, in Gayraud Wilmore, Sr.'s case, through military service). Like other African Americans in their context and throughout U.S. history, whatever pride, success, and community the Wilmores were able to experience, they could never be sure of economic and social stability in a white supremacist and economically exploitive nation.

Childhood in North Philadelphia

Wilmore, Jr. recalled that his father's stepfather and mother, known to him as "Mudd," lived with the family in the 1920s in a third-floor apartment on Jefferson Street, and moved with them into a smaller house on Stewart Street during the Depression.⁵² Gayraud, Jr. was the oldest of three children, all boys. The middle brother was Alfred Gardner, or "Al," who became a pitcher in the Negro Leagues, and in Latin America, and Canada, and was one of the first black players on the Philadelphia Athletics.⁵³ His baseball career was interrupted by Army service in the South Pacific with the 595th Field Artillery of the 93rd Division. He later worked as a maintenance engineer for the Philadelphia Housing Authority, and died in 1996.⁵⁴

The youngest brother, Jacques Edward, went by both "Jacques" and "Jack."⁵⁵ After graduating from Lincoln University, Jacques engaged in a career of civil rights work, serving as Director of the Southern Field Office of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, headquartered in Memphis, and of the Northeast Field Office in New York City, and later as Peace Corps country director in Tanzania.⁵⁶ Jacques died in 2007.⁵⁷

Gayraud, Jr., often known as “Gay,” said he had a “bossy relationship” with his brothers as a child.⁵⁸ He was the eldest, and said,

... my parents trusted me to carry the house key around my neck, to let their other two children in after school, or men who did odd jobs, and, after the death of my grandmother, to be the person generally in charge of everything until Mom or Dad came home at the end of the day.⁵⁹

Despite this childhood power dynamic, Gayraud, Jr. and Jacques would remain especially close, and Jacques would have a major influence on Gayraud, Jr.’s formation during his seminary years.

Beginning with kindergarten, Gayraud, Jr. attended Elisha Kent Kane Elementary School, a predominantly white school at the corner of 26th and Jefferson Streets, less than two blocks away from his home on Jefferson Street.⁶⁰ Wilmore wrote,

I remember, and my mother confirmed it, that I loved kindergarten and the elderly, white headed lady who ruled over it with a lovely, warm and reassuring voice everyday. Even now I can sometimes smell the large straw carpet that she rolled out for us to sleep on during nap time. I had no sense of skin color or other difference at that time.⁶¹

However, Wilmore soon gained his first awareness of white racism, a problem which would occupy much of his attention during his career in ministry and teaching.⁶²

I remember, as a young boy, sitting on the white marble stoop at the entrance to our house.... I sat watching the last wave of immigrants from Eastern Europe, after the First World War, move into our block day after day. Most of the immigrant kids could not speak or read English, so we taught them, but they soon learned from the white American children they met at school that the first word they needed to learn how to pronounce, with just the right amount of derision, was *nigger*.⁶³

Many black children were new to the city as well, their families having recently moved there from the South as a part of the Great Migration. Black (native and migrant) and white immigrant children played together, but for the latter this neighborhood was only a way-station, where they lived for weeks or months until their fathers got better jobs and were able to move them to join

local WASPs in “white flight” to “better” neighborhoods “where, in those days, no native-born black family had access.”⁶⁴

Thus Wilmore became aware not only of racial prejudice, but also of residential racial segregation. Wilmore’s home and school were “on the edge of a hostile white neighborhood, just to the west of us. I remember that we were separated by an invisible but impassable line which, if you crossed it, you’d better be ready to fight!,” often “with white adults avidly watching and egging on their kid.”⁶⁵ Wilmore had to cross that 26th Street line frequently, risking “getting into a fistfight because you were in enemy territory,” driven by one goal: “to get to the swings and ball fields in Fairmount Park,” about half a mile from his home and school, where he and his friends “liked to climb trees and play sandlot football.”⁶⁶

Wilmore called Fairmount Park “a magical place” to him as a child, a place of escape.⁶⁷

I went to the park to read, meditate, observe the world I had no part of and no expectation of entering later on. The park to me was a wonderful, magic, grass-covered land owned, operated and mainly occupied by white people who tolerated my presence and generally left me alone if I behaved myself.⁶⁸

As a child, Wilmore frequently found himself seeking both “escape” and intellectual stimulation, the latter of which was, in his case, largely a solitary affair.

My head was too much in the clouds. I was wrapped up most of the time in my own imaginary world. I roamed the streets. Once getting arrested for being found in the bushes reading a book on Sir Oliver Lodge and the philosophers around him. The cop who examined my library book suspected that I was reading something about sex and hiding in the bushes in order to accost a little girl who might wander by searching for her own engrossing adventure. I rarely took my two brothers with me when I slipped away to the park, or played baseball or football in the street, or went to the neighborhood library where I could slyly look at girls over the top of a book or while listening to classical music through ear phones in the roof garden of the main library on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. I know that I was selfish in those days. I preferred solitariness.⁶⁹

Wilmore did, however, find himself among a few young likeminded intellectual associates.

Occasionally I had one or two close buddies with me whom I organized into a natural science and philosophy club that imagined that one day we might hold public discussions or visit the famous (and to us, mysterious) Franklin Institute which was also on the Parkway at Logan Circle. We were interested in rocks and plants that we found in nature, and great ideas that we found in books....⁷⁰

Later in high school, his largely private intellectual pursuits would take on a more public profile, as a result of his entry into a state-wide essay contest, sponsored by the Poor Richard Club and the Franklin Institute.

The Franklin-Honored Essayist from the Hood

In 1935 Wilmore entered the all-male Central High, where he studied for five years.⁷¹ In his junior year, to his chagrin, “they moved the elite Central H. S. up to an all-white neighborhood in the far North, practically inaccessible to many impoverished Black families like mine.”⁷² The all-female Philadelphia Girls’ High School, elite “sister school” to Central, also moved north, and likewise “became snooty” absent their downtown students who were mostly immigrants or people of color.⁷³ The old Central High building became Benjamin Franklin High, where Wilmore continued his studies.⁷⁴ Wilmore “resented” the departure of Central High.⁷⁵

However, such disadvantages did not prevent Wilmore’s intellectual and social development. In his undergraduate admissions essay for Lincoln University, Wilmore wrote that he “went off to Central High with a great interest in metaphysics. There my interest was stimulated by the late Professor Landis and it became a sort of hobby.”⁷⁶ In high school, Wilmore participated in debate, drama, and philosophy discussion clubs, and wrote for and edited the student newspaper.⁷⁷ His student file at Lincoln also indicated that he had sold poetry to

magazines prior to his 1941 matriculation.⁷⁸ He also joined the Young Communist League (YCL), but “left the organization several years later after he discovered ‘he would not be allowed to think for himself.’”⁷⁹

Wilmore excelled in English, earning mostly grades of “G” (“Good,” on a descending scale including “Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Deficient”), while earning average marks (“F” or “F+” for “Fair”) in most other subjects (Latin, French, History, Algebra, Geometry, Chemistry, General Science, Music, “Normal Training,” Art, “Vocal Ensemble,” and “Hygiene”).⁸⁰ In his admissions essay, he wrote, “academic subjects like English, History, Political Sciences were considerably easy for me to grasp, but those of the more mechanical, calculable type like math and chemistry did not interest me very much. I did quite well in geometry, however, but my real love was English.”⁸¹ His transcript indicated that he had to do summer or evening school for social sciences, algebra, and chemistry, all in his 4th and final year. In his essay, Wilmore also lamented that after Central High departed, he could no longer take Latin and had to switch to French, a circumstance which “hampered my progress in High School,” along with his “selfish interest in English, Literature and Philosophy, and almost utter disregard for other required and essential subjects.”⁸² “My last year was my most fruitful,” Wilmore wrote.

I began selling poetry to various magazines, I won a State-wide Essay Contest sponsored by the Franklin Institute, I received first prize in the Dawn Magazine Short Story Contest, and was elected President of the Franklin Negro Culture Society and Feature Editor of the Franklin news sheet.⁸³

That Franklin Institute essay contest was especially meaningful for Wilmore. In his senior year in high school, he won first prize in a state-wide high school essay contest sponsored by the Poor Richard Club.⁸⁴

I had been encouraged to enter by a rather slow-moving and disheveled white teacher named Charles Williams - about whom it was rumored that he was an alcoholic who was more often high than sober. Nevertheless, he taught my English class and I learned a lot from him.

“What is the greatness of B. Franklin and what is his significance to us today?” That was the gist of the assigned topic and I worked for at least a month on three or four drafts that Mr. Williams critiqued until I handed him a final typewritten MS of about 12 double-spaced pages, if I’m remembering correctly. To my amazement, I won and, with my dad was placed at the head of a noisy children’s parade down the parkway to the Franklin Institute for an award ceremony before a great luncheon at the Poor Richard Club.

There I had a climactic presentation that afternoon. I was awarded a four year membership⁸⁵ in the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Philadelphia, with a membership card and unlimited access to its great and beautiful private library. I was escorted by my astounded father, who all that day walked around with a silly grin on his face, seeming to me to have suffered apoplexy, a stroke of speechlessness (probably for the first time in his life, because Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr. was known to be one of the most intelligent and articulate Black men in North Philadelphia)... But I am a witness that he was as shocked in his inmost being that day at the Poor Richard Club as his eldest son was, if not more so!⁸⁶

Winning this contest, however, was only the beginning of his deeper engagement with the Franklin Institute. Wilmore, Jr.’s membership card gave him full access to the Institute’s educational resources, and he used it regularly.

Winning that award and becoming a respected member of the Franklin Institute, without a doubt, became, for me, the most important shaping experience of my life - with the possible exception of [the Second World War]. Many were the after school hours when I could be found in the vast reading room of the Institute sitting alone at one of their magnificent mahogany tables poring over a big book on science and philosophy, especially on theoretical creation hypotheses and astrophysics. I was not pursuing traditional Christian theology in those days, although I could not circumvent the problem of God and human evolution, but my main interest was cultivating an ability to think, to reason, to write powerful prose and poetry that enlightened people and made the world a better place.⁸⁷

It might seem surprising that Wilmore has cited this children’s contest as, perhaps with his military service, “the most important shaping experience” in his life. Its almost singular

importance to him underscores how shocking and world-changing it must have felt for a poor black child in 1930s Philadelphia to receive city-wide recognition for his intellectual abilities, as, in his own words, “the Franklin-honored essayist from the hood.”⁸⁸ While his war experiences would commit him to a life of devotion to ministry and to racial justice, this essay contest helped crystallize another aspect of his “calling,” his vocation, to be a thinker, a scholar, an intellectual. It is also notable that through this contest Wilmore sought and received praise from white people for his work, including for his writing which probably lauded an icon of American history and patriotism in Benjamin Franklin. The contest thus foreshadowed a tension in Wilmore’s life between working with white people for the formation of a “more perfect union,” and seeking solidarity among black people in order to decry what Malcolm X referred to not as a American dream but as an American “nightmare.”

No more feeling sorry for myself because of being born and raised in the Black ghetto of North Philadelphia, or being the child of parents who had never darkened the door of a secondary school, or having been kicked out of the over-glorified Central High School because my parents couldn’t afford to give me the clothing, public transportation, and expensive school lunches way up in Onley everyday, nor the educational study jaunts to Paris and Rome during the summer holidays. But the relocation of my brown buns in those luxurious chairs in the library of the Franklin Institute, where you had to show a membership card to get past the front door of the building, made all the difference for me for at least a couple or three years. A new world of high erudition opened up to me, and although I couldn’t visit those lofty halls every single day, I was able for a magic period in the 1930s to explore European and American civilizations to my mind’s content. I have no doubt that I really became a beginning scholar and good writer by virtue of association with Mr. Charles Williams, of the cherry-red and bubbly nose, the Logan Square branch of the public library, and the great silent, book-lined private reading room of the Ben Franklin Institute of Philadelphia.⁸⁹



Figure 2. McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1895.

William P. White and William H. Scott, "McDowell Memorial Church, Twenty-first Street and Columbia Ave.," *The Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia: a camera and pen sketch of every Presbyterian church and institution in the city* (Philadelphia: Allen, Lane, and Scott, 1895), p. 82, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

McDowell Community Presbyterian Church

The New McDowell Church

In addition to his economic, racial, and familial circumstances and the Franklin Institute's recognition of his academic prowess, Wilmore was deeply influenced, especially in his religious commitments, by his family's engagements with McDowell Community Presbyterian Church in North Philadelphia. As previously mentioned, Wilmore, Jr. described his father as his "first teacher of religion," and as a pillar of his community.⁹⁰ Wilmore, Sr. was also a founding member of McDowell Church.⁹¹ The family had previously been Baptists, and Wilmore, Jr. had attended a Methodist Sunday School.⁹² Wilmore, Jr. wrote that after his father and John K. Rice had founded the North Philadelphia Civic League (NPCL),

One day some officials of the Presbytery of Philadelphia stood on the corner of 21st and Columbia Avenue with my father and Dr. Rice. The officials from Presbytery asked, "Do you see that fine church building across the street? It will seat more than five hundred people, but today no more than twenty elderly white people use it for no more than an hour's worship service on Sunday mornings. The rest of the congregation has gone to the suburbs. This building has a fully equipped kitchen and dining hall, about fifteen classrooms, a bowling alley in the basement, and a full gymnasium. The Presbytery of Philadelphia will give you folks that building if you will organize a new Presbyterian church on that property."⁹³

Rice and Wilmore, Sr. agreed. Thus the Wilmore family became Presbyterian - less than fifty years before their eldest son would write the book, *Black and Presbyterian*. Of the genesis of this new black Presbyterian church, Wilmore, Jr. wrote,

It was exactly the kind of property the North Philadelphia Civic League was looking for to house its expanding program. I don't believe that anyone has ever seen a church organized so quickly. Almost overnight the League, to all intents and purposes, became the new McDowell Presbyterian Church. They immediately persuaded Rev. Arthur E. Rankin, the pastor of the Berean Presbyterian Church, to become their pastor. Some of the officers of the League became the officers of the church, and many of the League members left Baptist and Methodist churches to become instant Presbyterians.

Fundamentally nothing about the League really changed, only the new name it took on. Its institutional commitment to and involvement in social action in North Philadelphia was deepened and broadened as the League was transformed into a church. The McDowell Presbyterian Church soon became one of the most culturally and politically active congregations in our section of the city.⁹⁴

A 1939 letter from Arthur Rankin appeared on the letterhead of “The McDowell Community Center, Under the Auspices of McDowell Memorial Community Church,” with John K. Rice listed as “Chairman of the Committee in Charge,” thus underscoring the ease with which the NPCL effectively became McDowell Church.⁹⁵ Wilmore, Jr. called the new church “the center of our family life and of my father’s culturally and politically dynamic world.”⁹⁶ He and his brothers were baptized there. The church featured “lectures, musical concerts, a dramatic club..., social clubs,” dances, athletic teams, and Scout troops.⁹⁷ Wilmore has written fondly of the church’s positive influence on and essential place in his community, his own life, and the lives of African Americans since the days of chattel slavery.⁹⁸

In May 1937, the small, white congregation of McDowell Memorial Presbyterian did indeed meet to vote on whether to ask the Presbytery to dissolve the church.⁹⁹ The new church took the name of McDowell Community Presbyterian.¹⁰⁰ However, Wilmore, Jr.’s characterization of McDowell Church’s former white members and the Presbytery portrays them a bit too charitably. Presbytery records indicate that, in addition to the requirement that the new members start a new Presbyterian congregation in the facility, they also had to pick up the building’s \$9,000 mortgage, and pay for \$2,500 in needed repairs to the building.¹⁰¹ Such expenses were a major reason the white members could no longer afford to stay there.

This was not the only case in which white Presbyterian churches closed down and passed their buildings on to African Americans, given the demographic changes brought by the Great

Migration and the resultant white flight out of northern cities. According to Andrew E. Murray, the 1920s were a high point for growth of black Presbyterianism in the North, with the founding of “over a dozen new churches... as a result of the Negro migration to the North during World War I.”¹⁰² Murray wrote that in the 1930s, “only two major [black] church projects were begun in the North” a decrease which he attributed to reduced church expansion funds due to the Great Depression.¹⁰³ However, these two new churches, St. Augustine’s Presbyterian Church in the Bronx and the Church of the Master in Harlem, would become two of the largest and most influential black Presbyterian churches in the United States in the coming decades. The new McDowell Church should have counted as a third major new black Presbyterian church during this period, but Murray seems not to have been aware of this development.¹⁰⁴ In fact, all three of these churches were founded within a year of one another, in facilities given to them by declining white Presbyterian congregations, and all three would quickly fill their pews with hundreds of African Americans who were new to Presbyterianism.

Prior to 1920, the neighborhood surrounding what would become St. Augustine’s Presbyterian Church in the Bronx was mostly white, with a high concentration of eastern European Jewish immigrants, with “non-white” persons constituting 0.02 percent of the population. By 1950, “non-whites” constituted 51.6 percent of the population, and a portion of those categorized as “white” were Puerto Ricans.¹⁰⁵ In 1938, a year after the founding of the new McDowell Church in Philadelphia, Edler G. Hawkins founded St. Augustine’s, which “began its work in a building which had been vacated by a white Presbyterian congregation.”¹⁰⁶ At one point, sixty-seven percent of St. Augustine’s members came “from non-Presbyterian backgrounds,” versus forty-seven percent “in most white Presbyterian churches.”¹⁰⁷



Figure 3. Edler G. Hawkins, 1948.

“Rev. Edler G. Hawkins,” 1948, Edler Garnett Hawkins (1908-1977) Biographical Vertical File, RG 414, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

In that same 1938 year, the Rev. James H. Robinson, who had moved from Tennessee to Ohio as a child and was a valedictorian graduate of Lincoln University ('35) and Union Theological Seminary ('38 - where he had been a classmate and friend of Edler Hawkins'), founded the Church of the Master, "in a [Harlem] building which had been abandoned by a white Presbyterian congregation."¹⁰⁸ Like the new members of McDowell Church, Robinson's own conversion to Presbyterianism included some tangible incentives. In Ohio, a local Presbyterian minister laid these incentives out for Robinson:

"Young man," he said, "I've been watching you. I hear you want to be a minister. If you were a Presbyterian, our church would send you on to college. Our Board of Christian Education provides a fund to help our boys." I thought, "What am I waiting for?" and next Sunday I joined St. Mark's. The transfer was no problem, for I was already part Baptist, Methodist, Sanctified, Christian and Congregational. There was no appreciable difference as far as I knew or cared.¹⁰⁹

Robinson and, especially, Hawkins would later become important mentors, friends, and allies of Wilmore in the fight for racial justice in the Presbyterian Church.

At the founding of the new McDowell Church, 222 adults signed the petition to ask for the new church, which was organized on September 24, 1937.¹¹⁰ John K. Rice and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr. are indeed the first two of eleven total names listed on the church's register of its trustees as of that founding date.¹¹¹ The new church was founded with 232 charter members.¹¹² Rice and Wilmore, Sr. are listed twenty-first and twenty-second, respectively, on the list of charter members.¹¹³ The two men probably sat together and then stood in line together at the founding meeting, while the secretary recorded new members' names and addresses in the register. "Patricia G. Wilmore" was also a charter member, as was the fifteen-year-old Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr.¹¹⁴ Gayraud Wilmore, Sr. served as president of the choir, as Sunday School

Superintendent, and as Scoutmaster for the church-sponsored Boy Scout troop.¹¹⁵ He was vice chairman of the church's "Committee on Young People's Recreation," due to his Sunday School and Scout leadership.¹¹⁶ He frequently spoke at session and congregational meetings.¹¹⁷ Patricia Wilmore led the church's missionary society.¹¹⁸ The Wilmore family therefore were central players in McDowell Church.

"The North Philadelphia Civic League on its Knees"

The new pastor, Arthur E. Rankin, known to Wilmore, Jr. as "Dr. Rankin," was installed in November 1937 and served until his retirement in March 1950.¹¹⁹ He would serve as an important mentor for Wilmore, Jr.¹²⁰ Rankin was a graduate of Lincoln University, and both he and a current Lincoln student and acquaintance of Wilmore's convinced the latter to apply to their alma mater.¹²¹ Rankin would later serve as a reference on Wilmore's seminary application, take up a collection at McDowell Church to contribute to his college fees, and even approach him about succeeding Rankin in the pulpit upon Wilmore's graduation from seminary.¹²² Rankin also delivered the "Prayer of Installation" at Wilmore's installation into his first pastorate.¹²³

Wilmore has described McDowell Church as, "the North Philadelphia Civic League on its knees."¹²⁴ Wilmore said that he learned "the social gospel" at that church. Rankin "preached an [sic] highly personal conversion on Sunday morning and practiced a kind of Black Presbyterian social salvation through community organization the rest of the week."¹²⁵ Wilmore wrote that "between my father and Dr. Rankin, I was baptized into a brand of Christianity that read the Bible through the daily newspaper and the newspaper through the Bible."¹²⁶ Wilmore received his "civil rights and social justice kitbag" from his father, Rankin, John K. Rice,

... and the other men of the revived McDowell Presbyterian Church which our family were among the first to join during the open warfare for good government, better schools, and decent life and livelihood in the changing neighborhoods along the Ridge and Columbia Avenue arteries in North Philly.¹²⁷

The church was “political and action-oriented,” and Wilmore has described it as “on the side of reform and the behavior of the Good Samaritan, with the extra clean-up tactics of more Black police officers and vigilant Democratic Party ward leaders.”¹²⁸ Wilmore added,

I don’t remember much evangelical preaching and revivals, but I do remember learning what it meant to be a Negro concerned about my community, neighborhood and city. Suspicious of the promises of white politicians and school teachers. Tuned in to the history of my race and the exploits of its great men and women, who visited my church from time to time, teaching the young people the special role we had in the liberation and redemption of the colored race. [Wilmore’s later education at] the theological seminary at Lincoln did not erase these early impressions, but made me more aware of the deficiencies of traditional Bible-thumping and apolitical goodness on the part of the church while the city was going to hell in a wheelbarrow.¹²⁹

Wilmore thus grew up enmeshed in a politically active, social gospel-oriented black church.

Church, community, and family formed Wilmore as politically and racially conscious within a Christian context.

Wilmore’s family and church paralleled both the Martin Luther King family of Atlanta and the Archibald Carey family of Chicago. The Wilmore, King, and Carey families of the 1930s-40s included “Senior” and “Junior” male church leaders in urban African American churches which espoused and practiced an African American social gospel and whose churches were closely tied to local politics.¹³⁰ Wilmore, Sr., unlike the elder King and Carey, was not clergy, but otherwise fit the mold as a church founder, trustee, and Sunday School Superintendent. In fact, despite the rather casual way in which the Wilmores and the NPCL converted to Presbyterianism, denominational identity might well explain why the elder Wilmore

did not become clergy: Presbyterians, more so than Baptists (the Kings) and Methodists (the Careys) insisted on especially stringent educational requirements for clergy, an emphasis which was closely tied to the relatively higher socioeconomic class of most Presbyterians. Perhaps an African American veteran and largely unsuccessful businessman could have become Baptist or Methodist clergy in his late 40s, especially if he was one of the two men charged with starting a new congregation, but that was less likely in the Wilmores' Presbyterian denomination.

Wilmore, Jr., in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, argued that there was a “de-radicalization of the black church” in the 1920s-40s, after the death of Henry McNeal Turner.¹³¹ While the King, Carey, and Wilmore congregations of that same era were not “radical” in the sense of Henry McNeal Turner, Henry Highland Garnet, David Walker, Nat Turner, or the other African American Christian radicals of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, they were nevertheless quite socially and politically engaged, even “activist.” This phenomenon of social gospel, politically-oriented urban black churches in the era of the Great Migration and the Great Depression thus raises questions about Wilmore’s “de-radicalization” assertion even in his own experience. In fact, these churches were forerunners of the leaders and institutions which would become known as “the Civil Rights Movement” in the 1950s-60s.

Examples of McDowell Church’s engagement with the social gospel, civil rights, and civic life included their hosting of W. E. B. DuBois as a guest speaker during Brotherhood Week in 1945, allowing the local African American Elks lodge to use church facilities for recreation for boys, and sponsoring programs related to the Charles M. Sheldon book, *In His Steps*.¹³² In 1947 the church encouraged congregants to read and discuss this important social gospel book, around the time of Easter.¹³³ Later that year the congregation staged a play based on the book.¹³⁴ Church

officials did decline to host a meeting of the Civil Rights Congress in 1949 because of an apparent scheduling conflict, but their consideration of the matter again fits with a pattern of civic engagement.¹³⁵

McDowell Church also nurtured engagements with two black Presbyterian institutions with which Wilmore would later become deeply involved: Lincoln University, and the Council of the North and West. The church regularly sent students to interracial summer programming at Lincoln University, sponsored by the largest American Presbyterian denomination at the time, the Presbyterian Church (USA).¹³⁶ In fact, Wilmore was one of those students. Despite its limits as a general strategy for racial justice, this programming made a significant impression on Wilmore at the time, given his previous interactions with white children.

When I was still a student at Central High School in Philadelphia, I attended one of the famous Lincoln University summer conferences.... [These] annual summer conferences gave white and black church people an opportunity to meet, sleep, talk, and eat together on the lovely tree-shaded campus of Lincoln University, where we could sit on the grass in circles and entertain each other with stories about how we first became aware of our racial phobias and prejudices. I have fond memories of the “Lincoln Summer Conferences” as an opportunity to get to know white Christians in a way that had not been possible in North Philadelphia, where we had to fight Irish Catholic Boys almost every day in order to get access to the playgrounds and ball fields of Fairmount Park. When we met with whites on Lincoln’s campus during the 1930s, race relations meant playing footsy across the color line, experiencing the warm fuzziness of interracial fellowship. But that was as far as it went.¹³⁷

McDowell Church also gave financial support to Lincoln, and Lincoln’s seminary students regularly preached at McDowell and helped lead youth church.¹³⁸ Arthur Rankin earned his Doctor of Divinity degree at Lincoln in June 1946, and the church chartered a bus to transport members to his commencement.¹³⁹ The church sent delegates and funds to the Council of the North and West throughout the 1940s, and offered to host the Council in 1950.¹⁴⁰ This Council

was a national organization or caucus of black Presbyterians, founded in 1893 by, among others, Francis Grimké as the Afro-Presbyterian Council and later the Afro-American Council.¹⁴¹ It was re-named the Council of the North and West in 1947, both to remove racial particularity from its name as a pro-integration gesture, and to reflect the fact that it represented African Americans in non-southern states, given some major differences in how black Presbyterian churches were organized in the South.¹⁴² The Council of the North and West will receive further attention in Chapter 2.

Lee Ella Wilson Wilmore

It was at McDowell Church that Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., then a student at Central High, met his future wife, Lee Ella Wilson, then a student at the “elite” Philadelphia Girls’ High School.¹⁴³ Lee and a girlfriend attended youth theater programming at McDowell Church, a group called the “Amateur Masques and Wiggers” which put on one-act plays in a “Saturday Evening Playshop” at McDowell Church.¹⁴⁴ Gayraud and Lee worked closely together in practicing their theater parts, and he soon found her to be “a confidant with whom I could discuss my inmost thoughts.”¹⁴⁵ He recalled that she was “quiet, but discerning, street wise but... very careful with boys.”¹⁴⁶ Of their romance, Gayraud wrote,

We went only for good night kisses in her vestibule before I threaded my way back home through dark and gang-infested streets between 10th and Wallace Street - “crosstown” - and my neighborhood west of Broad Street, the dividing line for the North Philly gangs. Lee told me that her mother made it a habit to ask after I left, “Doesn’t that boy have sense enough to know when to go home?”¹⁴⁷

Gayraud said of his relationship with his wife, “Lee stood with me in all the important decisions and changes in my life.”¹⁴⁸ Her dream had been to go to college at Spelman, but “sadly it never

worked out.”¹⁴⁹ During their somewhat itinerant marriage, Lee often completed courses at local colleges, hoping to one day complete enough for a Bachelor’s degree, another aspiration which went unfulfilled.¹⁵⁰

Buffalo Soldier

A Senatorial Scholar at Lincoln

After high school, Wilmore worked in several jobs as he saved money and considered his next steps. He was a “part time salesman,” a typist with the National Youth Administration, and a druggist’s clerk.¹⁵¹ He also worked for the Reading Railroad in Philadelphia, first transporting freight and then as a night watchman. He got that job through Lee’s stepfather, a railroad employee.¹⁵²

In weighing his post-high-school options, Wilmore knew that he could not afford Temple or the University of Pennsylvania, and he was not aware of schools outside the Philadelphia area. He also considered joining the Dr. Rankin, however, was a Lincoln graduate, and McDowell Church was closely tied to Lincoln. Wilmore also had contact with a current student, John Nelson Doggett, Jr., who did summer work at a neighborhood funeral home owned by the father of one of Wilmore’s friends. Doggett was planning to seek ordination in the Methodist Church. Rankin and Doggett “were as full of stories about Lincoln University as I was abysmally empty of any knowledge of African American institutions of higher education,” referring to Lincoln’s history as the first degree-granting HBCU, founded in 1854. Rankin and Doggett convinced Wilmore to apply.¹⁵³ Wilmore did so in September 1940, hoping to start in the fall semester, but was informed that the university would not have room for him until the spring semester.¹⁵⁴

Therefore Wilmore matriculated at Lincoln in early 1941.¹⁵⁵ He had to rely on several different sources for funding his education. Arthur Rankin collected a special offering at McDowell Church for that purpose.¹⁵⁶ Partly because of Wilmore, Sr.'s work as a 29th Ward committeeman for the Democratic Party, and at the recommendation of State Senator Harry Shapiro of Philadelphia, Wilmore, Jr. received a "State Senatorial Scholarship" which, according to Wilmore, black Democrats had ushered through the state legislature.¹⁵⁷ Wilmore also had to take "a dirty job washing dishes in the dining hall," enabling him "to pass muster with the school's bursar with only a bag of coins and a few dollar bills that I apologetically poured out onto his desk," including funds from the offering at McDowell Church.¹⁵⁸ Throughout his career at Lincoln, the Wilmore family would continue to struggle to pay their son's school bills, as evidenced by frequent correspondence between Wilmore, Sr. and school officials involving late, partial, and installment payments, and requests that the school find work-study employment for Wilmore, Jr.¹⁵⁹ A typical and telling example is a letter from Wilmore, Sr. to school official G. F. Birchard, December 7, 1941 - the date of the bombing of Pearl Harbor - saying,

Gayraud is very anxious and ambitious to continue his studies at Lincoln, he is very proud of the school and trying to work in order to lessen our burden. He is working there and I appeal to you to let him continue.... We are trying to help him all we can, we have two other boys to consider and the burden is heavy considering the amount of my earnings.¹⁶⁰

At another point, when Wilmore, Sr. was alerted to what Birchard referred to as an "oversight" in getting behind in his payments, Wilmore, Sr. clarified that this lateness was "due to our financial circumstances and not an oversight."¹⁶¹

In his first two years at Lincoln, Wilmore, Jr. was an honor student and was active in the University Band, Debating Club, Glee Club, and Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, and was President of

the Dramatic Club.¹⁶² He also joined several other students in a “revival” of the school’s NAACP chapter, serving as its inaugural Vice-President alongside President James Andrew Johnson and, at perhaps the chapter’s first public program, giving a speech on the national organization’s “history and activities.”¹⁶³ He took Latin, Appreciation of Art, Psychology, Biology, Education, several courses in Psychology, and was on his way toward a major in English, including courses in “Contemporary American Literature,” and “Advanced Composition.”¹⁶⁴ He also took Bible and “The Life and Significance of Jesus,” the latter likely taught by black Presbyterian minister and professor Shelby Rooks.¹⁶⁵ He earned two creative writing awards in his first year there.¹⁶⁶ He was preparing himself for a career in “journalism and fiction writing.”¹⁶⁷ Wilmore had worked hard to get to Lincoln, and was flourishing there. But the war beckoned.

The only thing I hadn’t considered after saving the earned but insufficient funds [to attend Lincoln], was the long arm of my local draft board. There was a war going on that insisted upon laying its unerring claim on the Franklin Institute-honored essayist from the hood.¹⁶⁸

“The Breath of the Induction Officer on the Back of My Neck”

Wilmore’s father was, as previously discussed, a proud veteran, decorated for service in France in World War I and a founder of the Crispus Attucks American Legion post. Yet the younger Wilmore was not enthusiastic about following in his father’s footsteps, and became concerned about the possibility of being drafted. In fact, he joined the Enlisted Reserve Corps as a means of avoiding overseas service.

Shortly after joining the class of 1944 my draft board warned me that I might escape being called upon before finishing college if I volunteered for for the Enlisted Reserve Corps - a classification which meant that you signed on as an enlisted person but you were permitted to complete your college degree as long as you maintained a decent grade

point average - and (this is the sad story!) this status would remain as long as the U.S. government did not need you directly involved in the armed services.¹⁶⁹

One of Wilmore's primary mentors at the time was his English professor and Dean of the College, J. Newton Hill. Hill, a Lincoln alumn, and was the University's first black full professor.¹⁷⁰ In a letter to Hill, Wilmore voiced these concerns about the draft, in the language of a budding English major:

There has been enough talk in circles of Lincoln men here to convince me that more than one man is looking to the Enlisted Army Reserve, proposed for this fall, as the last means of salvation. I, too, feel the breath of the induction officer on the back of the neck and my dream castles and ivory towers seem certain for destruction. Kipling talks about 'starting as an average kid and finishing as a thinking man,' but I'd much rather stay in school and reach maturity by natural processes. The 'thinking men' that come out of most wars rather think with their emotions. I received my classification this week. 1-A, of course. Despite the grey skies, I'm coming back to school with high hopes that you may be able (by remembering me when the Reserves are formed) to keep me out of the grasp of that induction officer I was talking about. . . . Here's hoping I'll see you in September and that you'll be able to give me some sorely needed assistance in this army business.¹⁷¹

Wilmore's concern was warranted, but the ERC would not prove his "salvation." Hill, who was also the ERC's Liaison Agent for the University, recommended Wilmore's induction into the ERC in the following month.¹⁷² Six months later, Wilmore was one of thirty-seven Lincoln students to be called up to active duty from the ERC.¹⁷³

I believe that about 200 Lincoln men signed up for the ERC. In the spring of 1943 the U.S. government's Enlisted Reserve Corps informed us (and hundreds of Black college students, and other ERC volunteers in school or the work force), that we were urgently needed for full-time military service. I remember a small passenger train pulling up at the unused railway station at Lincoln University Village, a mile or so from our campus, and regular army non-commissioned officers marching a column of Lincoln men down the platform where we boarded the empty cars for Fort Meade, Maryland. Along the way the train picked up groups of Black Enlisted Reserve Corps "volunteers" from Cheyney State Teachers College, near Philadelphia, Morgan State University in Baltimore, Howard University in D.C. and perhaps other college men that I didn't know about or notice joining us at the time. All Black men, I hasten to say. I need not go into details. It was a predetermined, carefully planned and executed program of the armed services, mainly the

army and the air force, to mobilize Negro college men for what many minorities had been asking for impatiently, officer training programs, flight instruction, Morse Code radio operation, etc. for speeding up the final effort which brought the Second World War in Europe and the Pacific to a much-yearned-for conclusion in 1945.¹⁷⁴

Wilmore seemed to imply that the government had taken advantage of these young black men through this apparently deceptive call-up, and it may have. However, he also alluded to the fact that the increased involvement of African Americans in the war effort was a goal which the government shared with many black leaders. Perhaps the most significant “long Civil Rights Movement” event in that decade was the success of the March-on-Washington-Movement (MOWM) in increasing black involvement in the defense industry in 1941.¹⁷⁵ Led by A. Philip Randolph, the MOWM threatened a mass protest in the nation’s capital, thereby forcing President Franklin D. Roosevelt to prohibit racial discrimination among U.S. defense contractors.¹⁷⁶ Black defense and civil service employment and union membership skyrocketed during the war.¹⁷⁷ In fact, Wilmore’s own father’s economic salvation arrived via increased opportunities for African Americans in war-related employment, as his long-term unemployment was ended in the early 1940s by a steady job with the U.S. Army Quartermaster Depot.

Still, Wilmore, Jr.’s classmates shared his sense of despair on the occasion of the ERC call-up. Wilmore’s 1947 senior-year yearbook, *The Lion*, referred to one of his classmates as “one of the many unfortunate E.R.C. boys of ’42-43.”¹⁷⁸ In the school newspaper, *The Lincolnian*, a 1948 graduate wrote, “Thinking back, I can recall many unpleasant incidents at Lincoln... the regrets when the E.R.C. moved out and [sic] the night of March 3, 1943.”¹⁷⁹

In recent reflections, Wilmore has implied that he had more agency in his decision to serve. In contrasting himself to Martin Luther King, Jr. and James H. Cone and thus implicitly

categorizing them as pacifists, Wilmore wrote, “But I decided that as a Christian I had to choose violence against Germany, Italy, and Japan, for some reasons [King and Cone] could not accept. Many of my friends and teachers were pacifists. I was not. I chose the Enlisted Reserve Corps instead.”¹⁸⁰ Wilmore surely thought about such questions in the 1940s, but his correspondence in that era indicates that he was more concerned about avoiding the war because of his own personal, practical considerations, than he was about defeating the Axis, and that his ERC enlistment was a way to avoid service rather than accept it.

A Foxhole Conversion and a “Firm Decision for Ministry”

Nevertheless, Wilmore served his country bravely. He served as a “tech sarg” radio operator in an anti-tank company in the 371st Combat Team (Regiment) of the 92nd “Buffalo” Infantry Division in Italy in 1944-45, including combat service near Massa, earning the Combat Infantryman’s Badge.¹⁸¹ Early in the war, prior to their marriage, Lee had “worked as a secretary to military personnel at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.”¹⁸² Gayraud recalled,

[We] had been married by an AME pastor of a small congregation in Tucson, Arizona on May 27, 1944 near Fort Huachuca, on the border with Mexico, where more than ten thousand African American soldiers of the 92nd Infantry Division were trained for desert warfare in North Africa. After several policy mix-ups and changed orders from Washington, the 92nd, weeks behind schedule, was landed on the African coast and from there disembarked at Livorno, Italy, to take position on the flank of the 10th Mountain Division in Tuscany, facing the Arno River and the German strongholds around the coastal city of Massa. Our assignment: to keep the Germans busy in Italy so that Hitler’s troops and munitions would be tied up in the South and, thereby, unavailable to help prevent the development of American beachheads in France and the Netherlands.¹⁸³

Wilmore has called his war service one of the most formative parts of his life. It included a “foxhole conversion” experience in Italy, which he described in a poem, entitled, “When I Met God,” later published in *The Lincolnian*.¹⁸⁴

Strangely enough, He stood there
Unembellished with the merest suggestion
Of ecclesiastic adornment,
But like any ordinary Joe or Willie,
He - smutched with grime
And plastered with the blood-soaked mud
Of Italian mountains -
Without the faintest mention of theology,
Talked with me in a foxhole....

Now let me elude the wooden cross, the poppies,
And the broken field, the noise
And the death of war.
Having the big eyes of Him
Who looks beyond the sun that sets today,
Tomorrow, and the next,
Let me too look,
And in that eerie glance to catch
The gleam of what I've dreamed.

Having known the One that is to be,
I shall at least be quiet in my tomb,
And unperplexed by Three.¹⁸⁵

Wilmore would refer frequently, throughout his life, to that religious experience. For example, the following is from a biographical sketch edited by Frank Wilson but undoubtedly reflecting Wilmore's own input.

The firm decision for ministry was made amidst the cruelty and horror of combat with the U.S. Army 92nd Infantry Division in the Italian Campaign of World War II. This experience convinced him of the depth of man's inhumanity to man and the need for something more enduring and profound than a secular or humanistic remedy for our sickness. There was nothing light, romantic or fleeting in the substance and import of this decision. The process and the event are recaptured most vividly in his own words: “I made a decision for Christ and for the ministry in a moment of personal crisis - trying to

make sense out of who I was, what I was doing in this absurd and terrifying situation and what I was to do with my life, if I managed to survive.”¹⁸⁶

“Limping Past the Statue of Liberty”

However, on the whole, Wilmore’s recollections of the war have focused less on this foxhole religious experience and more on criticism of discrimination in and ambivalence about his war service.¹⁸⁷ These concerns are evident in his 1940s correspondence about and later reflections on being called up through the ERC, as well as in other poems Wilmore wrote during the war and published his 1947 yearbook. In “Mail Call,” he criticized the war effort, saying,

we go out to purge a world
While in our very nostrils
The sickening stench is terrific.
Red, red is our tongue with protestation,
But our black soul is white with sterility.¹⁸⁸

Another poem, “Hope for the Black Soldier,” might also have hinted at this critique of war:

Only must you measure value with value,
And find in the immediate end
That the whole good outweighs forever
The partial good, however lasting it may seem,
And in the conscientious struggle,
Some heinous wrong may reap, for a time
Exceedingly ephemeral,
the rich harvest of striving.¹⁸⁹

Perhaps herein Wilmore questioned the “ephemeral” value of the “partial good” and “immediate end” caused by the “heinous wrongs” of war, when compared to the “whole good.”

In contemporary reflections, Wilmore has recounted the poor leadership of white officers over black regiments like his own, as well as his anger at the segregated conditions around him.¹⁹⁰ He wrote,

It was in the foxholes of shell-pocketed “Hill Georgia” near Massa and the grape arbors of Pietrasanta... that I began to realize that my Christian upbringing was different from that of the farm boys and street hustlers with whom I soldiered in Arizona, Louisiana, and finally on the Italian front in 1944-45. And when I look back on it now I think of the war as a hardening process for some of us in which hard knocks, bold-faced realism with blood and guts, took the place of an initial naïve wonderment, schoolboy adventurism, and a personal spirituality and Christian compassion for everybody who wasn’t black. White men who knew little about Black life back home assumed leadership over Black young men from the farms of the South and the slums of the North, and made a mess of it. Fortunately, the Russian army marching toward Berlin contributed what was necessary to help bring an end to it all in 1945.¹⁹¹

Throughout much of his time in the service, Wilmore,

... remained glum, or mostly bored, or basically angry about being in a segregated world with white field officers who wanted you to give them due respect while they were inflated with their white Southern college degrees, devoid of any rudimentary understanding of Black culture and religion, bloated with false ideas of natural superiority and an undeserving tradition of absolute obedience under fire. I was glad to be back home unharmed before the end of summer and today I know that I carried over some of what I felt in Italy to 475 Riverside Drive in New York.¹⁹²

Wilmore added,

I was not anxious to join that fight in Italy and spent as much time as possible writing long letters to Lee, teaching informal classes of fellow soldiers, and, after the war, taking college classes offered by American professors brought over from the states to teach at the University of Florence. They helped the G.I.’s collect course credits while waiting for transportation back home.¹⁹³

At the University Study Center at Mtousa, Wilmore earned credits in poetry, philosophy, ethics, and biology.¹⁹⁴

Wilmore also vividly described the bewildering experience of returning home at the end of the war to a still-segregated nation. He remembered passing the Statue of Liberty with other soldiers on a transport ship, “with mixed feelings and tears in our eyes,” “facing... misgivings, social stigma, and economic oppression,” and realizing that his father and other black soldiers had likely felt the same when they returned home from military service in the first World War.¹⁹⁵

As I stood by the railing of one of the crowded troop ships in our convoy, loaded with war weary soldiers, a strange emotion flooded my soul. We were limping past the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor with mixed feelings and tears in our eyes. Welcoming boats steaming around us, running up their flags and blasting their whistles. Were they really celebrating us? Was it to drive away the attendant fear and anguish? I was sure that what I felt on that occasion in 1945 was the same empty, haunting feeling that my Dad, Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., Private, First Class, must have felt, looking out on that exact, same scene twenty-seven years earlier. He knew something was amiss! Definitely wrong!¹⁹⁶

Wilmore, Jr. realized that upon his father's return from overseas service, also to New York Harbor, he probably faced "precisely the same misgivings, social stigma, and economic oppression," that his son would now "have to deal with all over again," especially as Wilmore, Jr. made his way to reunite with his wife in a "low-income Philadelphia Housing Project..., squeezed into a crowded, dark and fire-risky second floor."¹⁹⁷

Wilmore, Jr.'s military service is key to understanding his religio-racial formation into a "solid black hyphen." Scholars often attempt to explain religious beliefs, practices, and affiliations in reductionist terms, suggest that religion serves merely as a "cover" for political or economic motives. Politics, economics, and other factors can certainly influence religious sensibilities, but scholars must also recognize when religion itself can provide motivation for the decisions made by historical subjects. Judith Weisenfeld, for example, has explained how African Americans' affiliations with new religious movements during the Great Migration, while influenced by other factors, still reflected the undeniable impact of religious reasons internal to those movements. Similarly, Wilmore has asserted throughout his life, and maintains today, that God appeared to him in a foxhole, and he attributes his decision to pursue a vocation of ministry in the Presbyterian Church at least in part to that experience.

On the other hand, Wilmore's foxhole religious experience is inseparable from his experiences of the horror of war, his resentment regarding the Army's segregated conditions, his anger at the arrogant and white supremacist attitudes of his officers, and his awareness, both as he passed the Statue of Liberty and in subsequent years, that veteran status was not sufficient to convince white Americans to respect him or recognize him as an equal. The crucible of Wilmore's war experience combined his religious calling with a clear sense of what he would spend his life fighting against.

Throughout his life, Wilmore has often used military language in a metaphoric sense. For example, in his first book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (1962), Wilmore called for the church to "infiltrate" the world by means of the "deployment" of a "reconnaissance and intelligence force."¹⁹⁸ He noted that such reconnaissance should involve "little skirmishes," for "news should be made, not simply reviewed by the church."¹⁹⁹ Similarly, in a 2007 article, Wilmore referred to his combat experience to explain that an army needs a "highly mobile reconnaissance patrol... collecting intelligence... and risking occasional fire fights to test [the enemy's] strength."²⁰⁰ He wrote that CORAR acted as such a patrol, and that those "fire fights" were its support for the Black Manifesto in 1969 and for the legal defense of Angela Davis in 1971. "They were strategic risks allowing the astonished church to move forward into [unfamiliar] terrain."²⁰¹ While Wilmore himself, after his combat service in Italy, never resorted to violence in support of racial justice, he was neither a pacifist nor an absolute supporter of nonviolence. This militaristic language was metaphorical, but it also reflected the fact that he learned important lessons about the "fight" for racial justice while he was literally fighting against white racists in Italy. He brought those lessons home with them, and used his military

knowledge and experience to inform and enhance his work for racial justice within the United States.

As previously discussed, Wilmore chose ordination in the majority-white Presbyterian Church not despite, but because of his experience of serving under racist white military officers, saying, “I made up my mind to continue the fight against bigotry and racism at one of the sources of the sickness, the belly of the white, upper-middle-class church into which I had been baptized.”²⁰² Similarly, Frank Wilson highlighted “the white problem,” or racial justice, as the central cause of Wilmore’s life.²⁰³ Wilmore’s vocational choices therefore included three inseparable elements: a religious sense of call, a sense of outrage about racism, and a strategic interest in promoting racial justice in the heart of enemy territory, the white church.

Lincoln University

Back to School

After the war, Wilmore initially hoped to transfer his credits to Temple University, so that he could work in addition to completing his degree, but Temple took no transfer students that year because so many former Temple students were returning from military service.²⁰⁴ So instead Wilmore came back to Lincoln in the spring semester of 1946, receiving a scholarship contingent on his serving as an assistant to English professors J. Newton Hill and Waters Turpin.²⁰⁵ Wilmore also received G.I. bill benefits, and worked as a dormitory proctor in exchange for his lodging.²⁰⁶ He was “anxious to be in school again,” saying that he had “lost enough time in the Army.”²⁰⁷ Gayraud was now a father, his and Lee’s first child, Stephen Elliott, having been born in 1945, while he was overseas.²⁰⁸

After Wilmore's return to Lincoln, he held leadership roles in his fraternity, the forensic society, and *The Lincolnian* student newspaper.²⁰⁹ He also remained in the Dramatic Club, joined the chess club, and initially remained in the NAACP, though he set that aside during his senior year.²¹⁰ As a senior, Wilmore served as President of the Student Senate, editor of *The Lincolnian*, and assistant editor of *The Lion* yearbook.²¹¹

In a spring 1946 debate in *The Lincolnian* about peacetime conscription, Wilmore argued against such a practice. He said that the United States should contribute forces whenever the U.N. Security Council might call for an international police force. However, he contended that the existing "regular standing force" would be sufficient for supplying such needs.²¹² Despite this expression of assent to U.S. military interventionism, a hint of radicalism or conspiratorialism was present in his claim that "peace-time conscription would be a suspicious and superfluous post-war measure."²¹³ This radicalism continued in a vein similar to the warning about the "military-industrial complex" delivered more than a decade later by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, as Wilmore wrote,

There are - and we must finally confess it - certain persons in high governmental, military, and industrial quarters who would reap financial or prestige benefits from a large conscripted Army. They are the same persons who talk of peace and world cooperation with their tongues in their cheeks. We need jobs, housing, and higher living standards. We need a new foreign policy but we don't need peace-time conscription!²¹⁴

Wilmore's unhappy experience of being called up to service in the ERC likely contributed to his feelings about conscription.

Even in this early stage of Wilmore's career, some of the paradoxes which would come to define him were apparent. He was a conventional, even conservative figure - an active, involved, academically successful college student, a veteran, a Christian, and a supporter of U.S. postwar

interventionism. However, he also expressed radical concerns regarding potential military and governmental abuses of power for the benefit of the wealthy. Wilmore's willingness to point out the hypocrisy and deception of those who presented themselves as moderates, liberals, or people of goodwill, those who "talk of peace and world cooperation with their tongues in their cheeks," pointed forward to Black Power critiques of white liberalism, even as it also harkened backward to the biblical prophet Jeremiah.²¹⁵ Wilmore's attention here to issues of economic and social justice also presaged his commitment to those causes throughout his career.

Defending a Disrespectable Activist and Advocating for the Masses

Wilmore was also interested in and supportive of racial justice. As previously noted, before the war he had been a leader in the revival of the campus NAACP chapter, serving as its Vice-President. In March 1947 Wilmore also served as a Lincoln delegate to an "Intercollegiate Race Relations Conference" headlined by Walter White at nearby Swarthmore College, and Wilmore asked White a question about "the role of the Negro College in the conference."²¹⁶

Wilmore's most important racial justice work during this period was his leadership of *The Lincolnian* newspaper. Lincoln students had already been engaged in a decades-long, sporadic campaign to desegregate public accommodations in Oxford, the largest town near Lincoln, situated three miles from campus.²¹⁷ Oxford was a segregated town, located five miles above the Mason-Dixon Line. This desegregation campaign had included the 1942 revival of Lincoln's NAACP.²¹⁸ 1947 marked an uptick in these activities, which would become a more sustained campaign for the remainder of Wilmore's time at Lincoln. Students sought to test an un-enforced 1939 Pennsylvania state law banning racial discrimination in public accommodations, and in

1947 for the first time they were able to secure the arrests of alleged discriminators.²¹⁹ That year, students in Lincoln's NAACP staged sit-ins and were denied service, after which they successfully demanded that officials arrest and charge three restaurant owners for discrimination.²²⁰ They also secured charges against a school board member for his involvement in segregating local schools.²²¹ These charges were all dismissed for "lack of evidence."²²²

The Lincolnian gave ample coverage to these incidents, and its editorial page supported student activists.²²³ A political cartoon Wilmore published included a father (representing Lincoln's administration and faculty) who is trying to read a newspaper with headlines such as "building program," "high standards," and "body knowledge," but complains that he cannot read because of the noise of his child (representing the NAACP) jumping up and down on a locked box labeled "democracy in Oxford." In response to the father's complaints about the noise, the mother suggests, "then, why don't you help him open the box."²²⁴

While most of the editorials were unsigned, as editor-in-chief Wilmore likely wrote many and approved all of them. One such unsigned editorial involved a kind of strategic writing on behalf of seemingly radical and disrespectful activists to which Wilmore would return again and again throughout his career. It is highly likely that Wilmore wrote this editorial himself.²²⁵ The figure Wilmore defended this time was a classmate named Milton Robinson Henry.

Milton Henry was, like Wilmore, a Philadelphia native, a World War II veteran (a Tuskegee Airman), and a 1947 Lincoln graduate.²²⁶ He would later become a black separatist and reparationist, a critic of nonviolence, and a pallbearer for Malcolm X. In 1947, Henry was the president of Lincoln's NAACP chapter, and the head of a committee leading protest actions in

Oxford.²²⁷ After being denied service during the sit-ins, Henry had read the state's civil rights law aloud to restaurant proprietors.²²⁸

In the editorial, entitled, "The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future," the writer recalled the pre-war 1942 era of Lincoln's NAACP and the provocative tactics used by James "Deac" Johnson, who was the organization's President at the time (while Wilmore was Vice-President).²²⁹ According to the writer, Johnson had long sought unsuccessfully to marshal student support for civil rights activism in Oxford, but "people had merely smiled at him, patted him on the back and said: 'Now, now Johnson - don't get excited, old boy. You'll forget all about it.'"²³⁰ In order to be taken more seriously, Johnson snuck out of his dormitory at night to hang a lynch rope from a tree on campus, along with a sign which read, "3 Last Week."²³¹ The writer vividly recounted what happened next:

The next morning a warm October sun gleamed down on the ominous warning... and the hangman's noose swayed languidly in a breeze stirring in the direction of Oxford. A warm, sunny day - that day "Deac" scored - but his message was cold and grim, and we shuddered as we walked by it to class. That was the month they lynched Howard Wash in Laurel, Mississippi. And that was the year in which Lincoln students tried to do something, once again, about Oxford, Pennsylvania. "Deac" used to say that the same thing could happen in Oxford, and finally, nobody thought he was kidding...."²³²

The writer connected Milton Henry to "Deac" Johnson's style of provocative, inflammatory, yet ultimately effective activism, saying that Henry "follows in the footsteps" of such activists."²³³

One phrase which sounds especially like Wilmore's 1969 defense of James Forman read, "on occasion he may be a bit undiplomatic and impulsive but the personality of Milton Henry has nothing to do with the rightness of Milton Henry's fight for civil rights in Oxford."²³⁴ The writer added a further note which perhaps foreshadowed his future internal criticism of the United Presbyterian Church for its complicity in white supremacy:

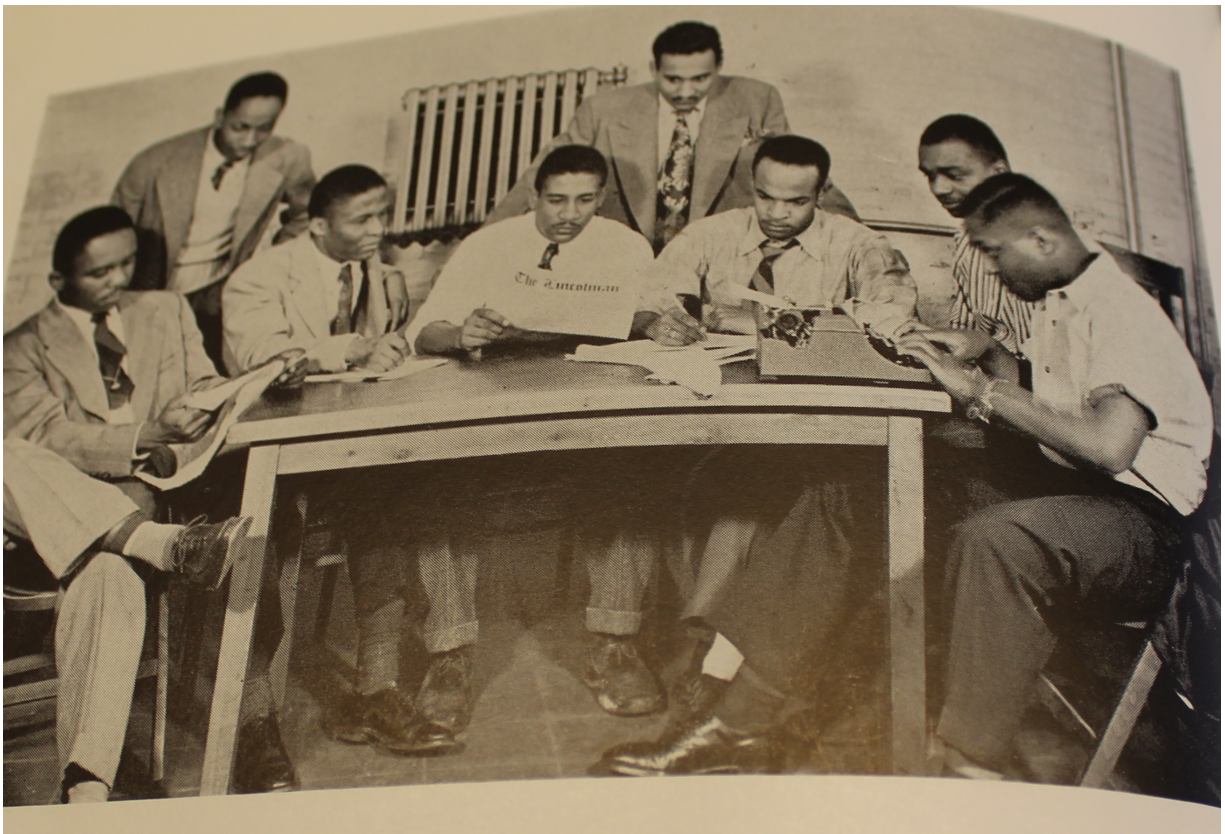


Figure 4. Gayraud Wilmore (center), as *Lincolnian* editor, 1947. *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, ed. the Senior Class, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1947, p. 56, the Lincoln University (PA) - Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archives.

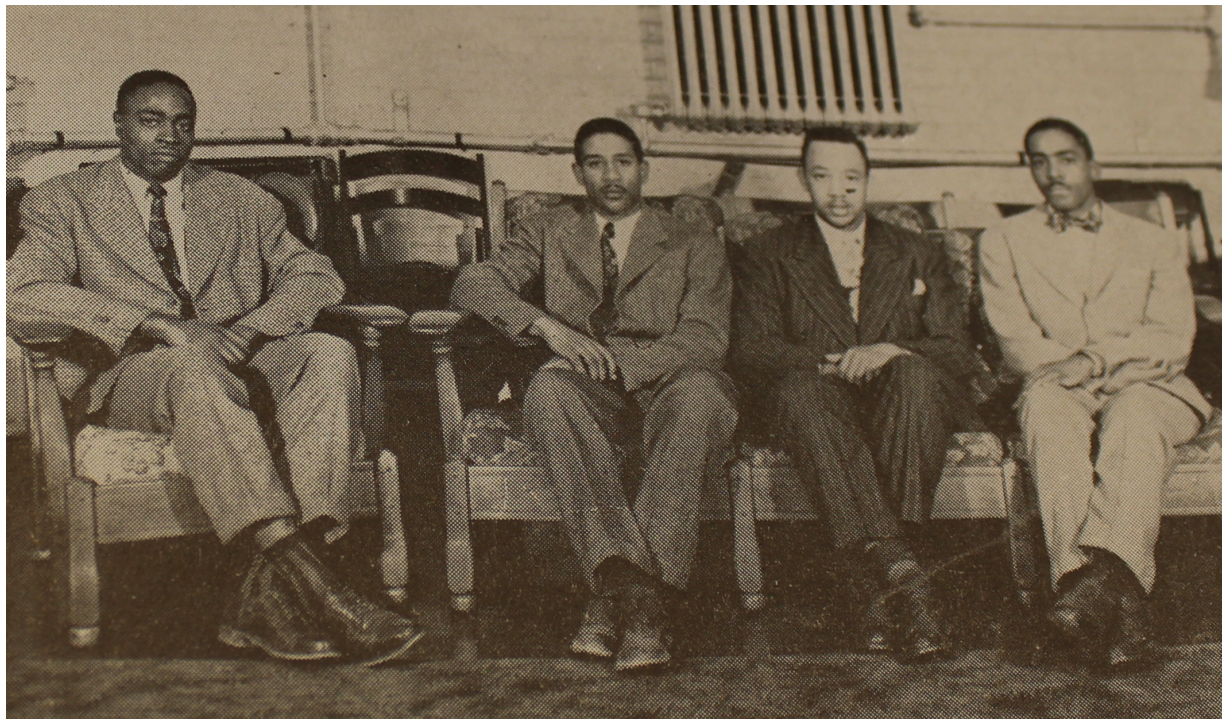


Figure 5. Gayraud Wilmore (center) as Vice-President of Delta Rho Debating Society, 1947. *The 1947 Lion*, p. 67, the Lincoln University (PA) - Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archives.

Lincoln's Delegation at the Inter-Racial Conference at Swarthmore College was not a little embarrassed when it was pointed out that, with all our financial and social ties with Oxford, the Administration and student body has permitted jimcrow to reign supreme a stone's throw from campus.²³⁵

The writer concluded, "Jimcrow in Oxford must go! The administration can speed its demise, but we do not have to wait for deliverance. We can - and must - back Henry and the NAACP to the limit."²³⁶

If Wilmore was indeed the editorial writer, then there were several things he did not acknowledge in terms of his own relationship to the subject matter. He did not note his own 1942 involvement in the NAACP alongside James "Deac" Johnson, his involvement in the Swarthmore conference, nor his relationship with Milton Henry. In a 1981 interview, Wilmore said that he and Henry had been involved in the Young Communist League while at Lincoln, certainly before and perhaps after the war.²³⁷ Wilmore had even served as a Lincoln delegate to regional YCL meetings in New York.²³⁸ It is not surprising that Wilmore would have chosen not to publicly announce his communist affiliation, nor that, in a newspaper written for a small campus on which everyone probably knew each another, he would decline to spell out all personal connections to his subject matter. However, the lack of mention of his associations with the NAACP and with Milton Henry allowed him to write from a position of distance, as a moderate, respectable campus citizen who was willing to vouch for the radical, disrespectable Henry as a voice for justice despite being "a bit undiplomatic and impulsive." In 1965, when Wilmore wrote in defense of the Watts Rebellion by detailing the squalid conditions of urban slums, he similarly employed autobiographical details without acknowledging them as such. His 1969 defense of James Forman sometimes acknowledged his relationship with Forman, but more

often he left such details out. Wilmore's defense of Milton Henry was a first of many instances in which Wilmore skillfully and strategically deployed his eloquent writing style to promote radical causes to a broad audience, by portraying himself as a voice of moderation, neutrality, and respectability, unlike the "undiplomatic and impulsive" Henrys and Formans. As a model citizen, Wilmore acted as a "pillar of cloud," and in doing so he was able to use his own straight-laced reputation and leadership position to support Milton Henry who, like James "Deac" Johnson before him was, in Herbert Marbury's typology, a "pillar of fire."²³⁹

In that same semester, a more mundane incident also highlighted Wilmore's willingness to act as a mediator between the aggrieved and those in power. In March 1947, he was a leader in a negotiation following a dispute between the residents of Lincoln's "Vets' Village" (the residences designated for war veteran students and their families) and the administration about the residents' use of stoves in their dwellings. Seeking to save money by preparing meals using the gas stoves in their residences rather than paying for meals in the dining hall, students were dismayed one day to discover that school officials had disconnected their stoves and moved them outside to await removal.²⁴⁰ Students promptly reinstalled their stoves. Negotiations resulted in a settlement which included specific rules for stove use, and the responsibility of students for the cost of gas used in the stoves. The settlement also designated Lincoln President Horace Mann Bond, school official G. F. Birchard, and Gayraud Wilmore as "Vetsville administrators in that order, with Wilmore acting as liaison."²⁴¹ Wilmore, therefore, was a person who saw himself as an advocate for "the masses," and officials also found him to be a person with whom they could work - an in-between, pragmatic, mediating role that he would reprise again and again throughout his career.



Figure 6. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., 1947.

The 1947 Lion, p. 37, the Lincoln University (PA) - Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archives.



Figure 7. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., 1947.

The 1947 Lion, p. 37, the Lincoln University (PA) - Langston Hughes Memorial Library Archives.

Graduation and Seminary Study

Wilmore, an English major, was valedictorian, voted “most likely to succeed,” and earned awards in English and Debate at his 1947 commencement.²⁴² He also earned the William H. Madella Prize, awarded to “the graduating student who has made the most general progress and has demonstrated high character, conduct, and scholarship during his career at Lincoln University.”²⁴³ His yearbook noted that Wilmore “gave the 92nd 3 years of his service,” calling him an “orator,” “scholar,” “provider of a very lovely family,” and “in with the Deans.”²⁴⁴ “In with the Deans” perhaps reflected both his academic success and his ability to work with the administration, as in the Vetsville dispute. At the Wilmore’s 1947 commencement, future Presbyterian minister and Civil Rights leader Milton Galamison earned his Bachelor of Divinity, Thurgood Marshall and Ralph Bunche received honorary doctorates, and Bunche served as the commencement speaker.²⁴⁵

Wilmore’s professors and primary mentors during his undergraduate career, in addition to J. Newton Hill and Shelby Rooks, included Waters Turpin and Frank T. Wilson, Sr. Turpin, instructor and later professor of English from 1940 to 1950, would eventually become recognized as an important figure in the Harlem Renaissance and in African American literary history, largely because of his historical novels depicting African American experiences in the early twentieth century.²⁴⁶ Turpin and Hill taught most of the English courses at Lincoln while Wilmore was an undergraduate, and they both served as advisors to the Dramatic Club.²⁴⁷

Frank T. Wilson, Sr. was the son of a Lincoln alumn and minister, earned two Lincoln degrees himself, spent thirteen years working with the Student Christian Ministry (SCM), and then in 1936 joined Lincoln’s faculty as professor and Dean of Men.²⁴⁸ His son, Frank T. Wilson,

Jr., was a schoolmate of Wilmore's, and a *Lincolnian* staff reporter during Wilmore's editorship.²⁴⁹ In 1949, Wilson, Sr. received a call from William Stuart Nelson to inform him that he had been appointed as Nelson's successor, Dean of Howard University's School of Religion.²⁵⁰ Wilson, Sr. later served as a Presbyterian denominational official for foreign missions and ecumenism, and edited an important collection of biographical sketches of black Presbyterians including Gayraud Wilmore and Edler Hawkins.²⁵¹ Wilson taught most of the education and psychology courses at Lincoln, and Wilmore took several psychology courses as an undergraduate.²⁵² Wilson, Sr. had also served as advisor to Lincoln's 1942 re-organized NAACP chapter.²⁵³

During his senior year in the College, Wilmore had also received special permission to begin taking seminary courses, including "Paul and His Letters" and "The Social Teachings of Christianity."²⁵⁴ After earning his B.A., he became a candidate for ordination in the Philadelphia Presbytery, and enrolled in the Bachelor of Divinity program at Lincoln's seminary.²⁵⁵ In his application to the seminary, he listed as references Arthur Rankin, Frank Wilson, and a Philadelphia employer named Percy Cherry.²⁵⁶ Wilmore stated that his vocational interest in the ministry was due to its "opportunity for community work and social engineering," his experiences at McDowell Church, and "an intense spiritual experience during combat service abroad."²⁵⁷ He continued to receive scholarship support for his schooling while in seminary.²⁵⁸

Seminary Mentors

During his first two years in seminary, Wilmore worked as a student minister at Faith Presbyterian Church in York, Pennsylvania, about 100 miles from Lincoln, traveling there on the

weekends.²⁵⁹ Wilmore also served as a Teaching Fellow in New Testament Language in the 1949-50 year, and had “a share in the chapel and student ministry.”²⁶⁰ His primary professors and mentors in seminary included David Swift, Andrew Murray, and Jesse Belmont Barber. David Swift, who was white, taught at Lincoln from 1947 to 1951, including “Social Thought of Christianity” and “Contemporary American Christianity,” and while in seminary Wilmore served on the “Religious Activities Committee” with Swift, President Bond, and Dean Jesse Belmont Barber.²⁶¹ Decades later, Swift wrote *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (1989), an examination of several antebellum black abolitionist clergy, many of the Presbyterian, including Samuel Cornish, Theodore Wright, Henry Highland Garnet, Amos G. Beman, and James W. C. Pennington - many of the same people Wilmore would analyze in his 1972 *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.²⁶² In the acknowledgements, Swift noted his “special debt to Gayraud Wilmore, for his published work, for personal exchanges over the years, for the encouragement I have been given by his support over the years, and for the challenge of his critical comments upon reading the near-final typescript.”²⁶³

One of Wilmore’s favorite professors at Lincoln was Andrew E. Murray.²⁶⁴ Murray, also white, taught church history at Lincoln beginning in 1949, and then became Dean of the seminary in 1951. When the seminary closed in 1959, he became a professor of religion, serving there until his 1985 retirement.²⁶⁵ Murray was the author of *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History* (1966).²⁶⁶ Murray was also engaged in ministry with migrant farm workers, as well as the promotion of peace, arms control, ecumenism, and equality in terms of race, sex, and sexual orientation.²⁶⁷ He also played a key role in making Lincoln’s seminary interracial.²⁶⁸ However, as is unsurprising for a white man in that era, Murray had some limits in terms of his vision for

racial and social justice, as revealed in some of his diary entries. In a May 1963 entry, Murray criticized “some racial extremists” who had visited Lincoln, noting that “their appeals to emotion had even the applause of some of our students (in spite of their better judgment). . . .”²⁶⁹ A speaker from among this group received a question “from a white Christian who asked him what his group did about forgiveness,” and the speaker answered “that the white man could be forgiven when he demonstrated by his deeds that he was worthy of forgiveness.”²⁷⁰ Murray criticized this sentiment, arguing that “forgiveness is always undeserved.”²⁷¹

Three months later, another diary entry expressed similar discomfort with what Murray saw as overly militant activism for racial justice, which seemed to stray from Christian theology. He wrote,

The present struggle for civil rights has made use of many of the symbols and motifs of Christianity, the freedom songs, for example, are rooted in the revival songs of a previous generation. Perhaps it is presumptuous to suggest that this movement, like many other good causes, runs the risk of authentically assuming that God is behind every detail of the program. No cause, no matter how righteous, is free from the dangers of idolatry. God simply cannot be enlisted in any cause, for He is beyond our causes and is still Lord and Judge. This movement, while seeking to do the will of God, must always be aware that it stands under the judgment of God. Unless this is done the crusade for civil rights will lapse into the sins of other crusades - an unloving self-righteousness that is unaware of its own hypocrisy. With the need for justice is a need for a return to the well-springs of justice - a... faith in a just God. Without this personal faith no one can carry on the hard, grinding struggle for long without becoming bitter or inhuman. There must be inner repentance and a realistic facing of one's own sins in judging the sins of others.²⁷²

Murray's concerns about idolatry reflected the particular emphases of the Reformed tradition. In general, in his 1963 diary entries, Murray suggested that the Civil Rights Movement was moving a bit too quickly and recklessly - even as young black activists like Gayraud Wilmore and John Lewis criticized more senior activists for their hesitancy and caution, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Murray made this diary entry two days before the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The day after the march, Murray wrote,

Yesterday was the great Civil Rights rally in Washington. It was a great outpouring of concern for freedom for all our people. It was significant to me that there were so many symbols of the Christian heritage of the American Negro. The “freedom songs” are based on old revival hymns and call forth an emotion which is deeply religious as well as political. The speeches which touched the crowd most deeply were those which in style and content came closest to the old-time preaching. In a time of crisis men turn to what is most familiar and deepest. But what of the future? It is unlikely that this type of religion which is part of a folk culture will continue unchanged. Integration will bring a certain loss of traditional forms, but it will result in new forms. It may be that American Negroes must pass through a desert of secularization before the new pattern emerges. It may be only a remnant which will carry on the tradition, but surely if it is part of God’s plan, even if it dies it will bring forth a rich harvest.²⁷³

Murray was clearly a supporter of racial equality. However, on the day after this momentous march his greatest concerns were not about racial equality, but about the continuance of religious faith and practice among African Americans, in stark contrast to the concerns of many of the young black activists among his current and former students. Even in an entry the next day which reflected on the injustices faced by Francis Grimké, Murray focused particularly on Grimké’s exclusion from white church spaces - reflecting a typical concern of white Christian liberals at the time, who, while not opposed to legal or political equality in terms of race, often were more animated by the cause of church integration.²⁷⁴ It is perhaps also noteworthy that Murray, despite close geographic proximity to Washington, D.C., seems not to have participated in the march.²⁷⁵

Murray’s *Presbyterians and the Negro* is an impressive work which still has yet to be replaced by any other authoritative study of that subject. However, this book is limited in one key respect. While it does attend to African American Presbyterians, its greater interest is in

white Presbyterian attitudes toward and treatment of African Americans. A more accurate title would be “White Presbyterian Engagement with African Americans.” Wilmore’s own historiographical work on black Presbyterians, especially in *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* and *Black and Presbyterian*, drew heavily on Murray’s, but also served as a corrective to Murray’s overemphasis on white people in his *magnum opus*.

Wilmore expressed some of his thoughts about his indebtedness to Murray, as well as the ways the two men diverged, in a letter Wilmore wrote to Murray’s widow, on the occasion of Murray’s 1991 death. Wilmore wrote,

I... feel a little sad that we rarely saw or had much to do with the two of you these last several years. Our paths have gone in different directions. Perhaps I should say, the same direction but in different tracks. I was always aware of your Witherspoon Society activities even though, since its early years, I had not thought it was the place that needed my energies the most. But I was always glad that you and Andy were hanging in there and that you brought to that small, but enterprising group of mostly white people, the uncommon and profound sensibilities and commitments you had learned and cultivated over many years at Lincoln. I only want to say now that Andrew Murray was a rare friend and beloved teacher of Lincoln men and of the Black membership of the Presbyterian Church. He was, of course, much more. But that is how I will always remember him. His *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History* is a precious heirloom he has left us and no one will write any serious history of African American Presbyterians in the future without depending considerably upon that work he did so lovingly and faithfully. The last correspondence Andy and I had was on a monograph that I wrote for the book by Mulder, Coalter et al, which depended heavily on what he had said about the Afro-American Presbyterian Council of the North and West. I will always remember him as my mentor. God will surely bless you for the loving partnership you gave him all these years. You two were models of ministry for clergy husbands and wives.... Lee and I are sorry that the great distance will not allow us to be there for the memorial service....²⁷⁶

This letter reveals some of the angst in some of Wilmore’s relationships white people. He had a strong relationship with Murray, but Murray’s work with the Witherspoon Society, which focused primarily on opposing sexism and homophobia in the Presbyterian Church, was a different focus than the one taken by Wilmore. The two were not at odds, but neither seems to

have been able, in the 1970s-80s era, to take a thoroughly intersectional approach to justice concerns.

Murray was an important mentor to Wilmore, but archival records suggest that Wilmore's relationship with Jesse Belmont Barber, Dean of Lincoln's seminary until 1951, must have been at least as important. In his letter informing Wilmore of acceptance into the seminary, Barber said, "I am personally very happy to know that you are coming."²⁷⁷ During the summer of 1949, Wilmore served in several internships, and corresponded regularly with Barber during and about them. These internships included work at the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, headed by Marshal L. Scott and based out of the denomination's Labor Temple in New York City, as well as ministry among migrant workers near Allentown, Pennsylvania (in which he had also participated during the previous summer).²⁷⁸ Both of these experiences were foundational for Wilmore in terms of connecting social action and Christianity, especially in terms of labor, economics, and race. Barber had also heartily recommended Wilmore for his internship at Faith Presbyterian in York, and would later prove instrumental in securing what would become Wilmore's first full-time pastorate.²⁷⁹

Networks: Civil Rights and Black Presbyterians

Lincoln's guest speakers, preachers, and honorary degree recipients from Wilmore's time at the school also reveals some of the networks of which he was a part. In addition to those previously mentioned - Thurgood Marshall and Ralph Bunche - these individuals included Howard Kester, A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin, Adam Clayton Powell, Charles Hamilton Houston, William Stuart Nelson, Eleanor Roosevelt, Tollie L. Caution, J. Oscar Lee, E.

Franklin Frazier, Donald Smucker of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Henry Sloane Coffin of Union Theological Seminary, Channing H. Tobias of the YMCA, Margaret C. Jones of the American Friends' Service Committee (AFSC), Howard Brinton of Pendle Hill, Margaret Mead; Walter White, Clarence Mitchell, and Ella J. Baker of the NAACP, and black Presbyterian ministers Arthur E. Rankin, McLain C. Spann, John Dillingham, LeRoy Patrick, Robert P. Johnson, Shelby Rooks, Milton Galamison, Samuel G. Stevens, Edler G. Hawkins, and James H. Robinson.²⁸⁰ Lincoln was therefore closely connected to a network of civil rights and labor activists, black academics, black Presbyterian ministers, and Quaker peace activists, and sought to expose students to these figures. Also of note are Lincoln's connections to Africa, especially to anti-colonial, pro-democracy efforts there. Lincoln alum and founding Ghanaian president Kwame Nkrumah was the most famous of these connections, but not the only one. For example, in 1951, Horace Mann Bond wrote in *The Lincolnian* that six Lincoln graduates had just been elected to the Nigerian Parliament, and alum Nnamdi Azikiwe "led his political party... to a victory almost as striking as that won by Kwame Nkrumah" in the Gold Coast.²⁸¹

The most important of these networks for Wilmore's own career was that of black Presbyterian ministers. He was part of a cohort of Presbyterian students, ministers, and professors, most of them black, who would continue the university's legacy of promoting civil rights and black advancement, in the tradition of older alumni like Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, and Kwame Nkrumah. For example, Milton Galamison and Maurice J. Moyer overlapped with Wilmore at Lincoln, and both, like Wilmore, earned multiple degrees at Lincoln and would become Presbyterian ministers and prominent Civil Rights activists. Galamison, also a Philadelphia native, later pastored Siloam Presbyterian in Brooklyn, and, through the NAACP,

led school desegregation and black self-determination campaigns in New York City in the 1960s.²⁸² Maurice J. Moyer later founded Community Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, where he served for his entire ministerial career of forty-six years, as he, meanwhile, became giant of the Civil Rights Movement in that city.²⁸³ Wilmore participated in Moyer's ordination service in 1952.²⁸⁴ The two men corresponded in the 1960s about civil rights demonstrations in the Philadelphia suburbs, and Moyer named a son "Norman Gayraud," after his old friend.²⁸⁵ Wilmore, Galamison, and Moyer were also members of some of the first Lincoln graduating classes after the 1945 appointment of Lincoln's first African American President, Horace Mann Bond. Samuel Govan Stevens, who was a professor and the university's first and longest-serving chaplain, arrived at Lincoln in 1951, just after Wilmore's graduation, but he and Wilmore were in the same presbytery in the early 1950s, and Stevens' twenty-five years in his post made him a key figure in this network of black Presbyterian seminary graduates during the Civil Rights era. Stevens, Galamison, Moyer, Edler G. Hawkins, Shelby Rooks, McLain C. Spann, Frank T. Wilson, Sr., Jesse Belmont Barber, and James H. Robinson of the Church of the Master (another Lincoln University valedictorian) were also active with Wilmore in the national black Presbyterian caucus known as the Council of the North and West during the 1950s.²⁸⁶ Rooks, who had likely taught Wilmore at Lincoln before the war, left Lincoln to succeed William Imes as pastor of St. James Presbyterian in Harlem, serving there from 1943 to 1973.²⁸⁷

The Wilmore Brothers and “Operation Oxford”

In his seminary years, Wilmore experienced the influences both of shared ministry experiences with Lee, and of activist experiences with his younger brother, Jacques. Gayraud and Lee spent two seminary summers engaging in ministry for “agricultural migrant workers in Pennsylvania and New Jersey” with the Home Missions Council of North America, an experience which Gayraud described as helping to “radicalize” the couple as well as “shape our understanding of social injustice and southern Black culture.”²⁸⁸ Jacques entered Lincoln’s College in February 1947, just weeks before the Oxford sit-ins led by Milton Henry, after serving for two years in the Army, including a stint in the Philippines in 1945-46.²⁸⁹ An Alpha Phi Alpha, Student Senator, and Sociology major, Jacques was an excellent student, graduating in three and a half years.²⁹⁰ He was also quite active in the campus NAACP, eventually serving as its President. In 1949 Lee gave birth to a second boy, and the couple named him for his uncle, Jacques (often pronounced, in both cases, as “Jack”).²⁹¹

The elder Jacques graduated from the College in 1950, at same time Gayraud was graduating from the seminary; in fact, the Wilmore brothers were both valedictorians for their respective degree programs at the same 1950 commencement.²⁹² Jacques lived with Gayraud and Lee in “Vets’ Village” during the three years when they overlapped at Lincoln.²⁹³ Gayraud described Jacques, as NAACP President, as “the indefatigable leader” of the Oxford desegregation campaign. While Gayraud did mentor the younger Jacques, Gayraud also said,

I needed Jack around as much as he needed us, and during those years.... I was privy to all the desegregation fact and rumor that the campus NAACP was engaged in at Oxford.... I realize now how much, during those years, I watched, questioned, and learned from my “baby brother” about the realities of desegregating places of public accommodation a stone’s throw from the Mason-Dixon line....²⁹⁴

Gayraud has credited Jacques with teaching him the “tactics” of the NAACP, and said that Jacques and his undergraduate comrades “inspired me in those last two years we were together at Lincoln” to renew his commitment to “civil rights and social justice,” which Gayraud had first received from his father and his childhood church.²⁹⁵

One example of Jacques’ influence on Gayraud was in the brothers’ anti-segregation work in their final months at Lincoln, in early 1950, in an attempt, as with earlier activism, to force Oxford merchants to comply with the 1939 Pennsylvania state civil rights law.²⁹⁶ On December 27 of the previous year, four Lincoln students visited the Oxford Hotel Coffee Shop and the Oxford Theatre.²⁹⁷ The Coffee Shop refused to serve them, and the Theatre refused to admit them to the white section. The students then swore out warrants for the owners of the establishments in question, Chris Vergis and Joseph Crawl, before a Justice of the Peace, and a Grand Jury was convened to consider whether to indict the merchants. The four students were Benjamin Holman, Ralph Anderson, and Jacques and Gayraud Wilmore.²⁹⁸

In the weeks between this incident and the deliberations of the Grand Jury, students also engaged in further actions. On January 11, Jacques and three other students again visited the Theatre and were arrested for sitting in the white section, but charges were dropped on January 13 after Crawl and the arresting officers “admitted that the students did nothing but refuse to move until the officers appeared.”²⁹⁹ On January 16 and 17, students were refused service at the American Restaurant, and, again, at the Coffee Shop. Five students were charged with “disturbing the peace,” but four of them were acquitted and the fifth received a fine for “disorderly conduct.”³⁰⁰ Despite such accusations of “disturbance” and “disorderliness,” Jacques

Wilmore's 1968 recollections of the sit-ins underscored the respectability politics present in these demonstrations, as well as veterans' participation in them.

...we got dressed up, we got in car caravans, we took our books and went to restaurants, and filled up every seat, and sat there.... In those days, I was a veteran, return, and we went around looking like bums, but so we decided we were going to town, we ought to get dressed up, so you wear a white shirt and a tie and your suit that you'd wear on Sunday that you wouldn't normally wear on the campus, so they wouldn't have that excuse, and then we'd just sit in. And we did this night after night....³⁰¹

A February 12 Lincoln Alumni Rally in Philadelphia on the occasion of Abraham Lincoln's birthday turned into a rally against discrimination in Oxford.³⁰² Jacques opened the rally "by presenting the history of the movement" - just as his older brother had done to open the re-organized Lincoln NAACP's inaugural program back in 1942.³⁰³ The rally also included speeches by alumn and leading NAACP official Thurgood Marshall, Pennsylvania gubernatorial candidate Richardson Dilworth, three congressmen, and six other civic leaders. According to *The Lincolnian*, Marshall "called for sincere efforts on the part of all Pennsylvanians and decried the dilatory means by which both Democrats and Republicans play catch with a political hot potato such as civil rights legislation."³⁰⁴ Dilworth, who would lose the gubernatorial race but later became District Attorney and then Mayor of Philadelphia, called for "firmness, calmness, understanding, and courage," as well as "state intervention from the top down."³⁰⁵ A fiery state Assemblyman demanded no tolerance for "Bilbo's Mississippi, Talmadge's Georgia, nor Duff's Chester County."³⁰⁶

Later that month, *The Lincolnian* reported that segregationists had accused Lincoln's NAACP chapter, like its national organization, of being affiliated with "Communist front organizations," and having "selected the peace-loving communities of Chester County for its

most recently organized campaigns of agitation and unrest.”³⁰⁷ They charged that Lincoln’s NAACP had “formed units of young Negroes which are dispatched” to create “unrest and public disorder,” and warned that the Grand Jury was really deciding “whether or not the NAACP’s ‘action squads’ are to be given a free hand in Chester County.”³⁰⁸

On February 20, the Chester County Grand Jury met and heard arguments by the District Attorney in favor of an indictment.³⁰⁹ Three faculty members were called as witnesses, including religion professor David Swift. To the dismay of Lincoln’s students and faculty, including Gayraud Wilmore, the Grand Jury deliberated for a mere forty-five minutes, “found that Crowl and Vergis had not acted illegally,” declined to indict the men, and charged the NAACP with \$30 in court costs.³¹⁰ *The Lincolnian* headline read, “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.”³¹¹ In recalling the incident, Jacques Wilmore noted, “there were criminal statutes, and you had to get an indictment by a grand jury, and the grand jury was made up of local farmers, and they just refused to indict.”³¹² An unsigned *Lincolnian* editorial stated,

Jaques [sic] Wilmore and the campus chapter of the NAACP have made a valiant attempt to have the Civil Rights Law of the state of Pennsylvania enforced. They went into the fight with the law, as written, on their side. But this was not enough. In America, in Pennsylvania, in Chester County, this was not enough. There is cause enough for shame when one has to fight to have the law enforced, but when the law is ignored in spite of positive evidence, it becomes a farce and a pitiful reflection upon the democratic system as a whole. The political jostling of Civil Rights legislation on the national level daily illustrates this fact. But, we are wiser now. We have learned that the impossible is needed and we are prepared to produce the impossible. We have learned much from our defeat. We know that many people in Chester County are aware of our existence [sic]. The high caliber of our representatives and the excellent leadership which they have maintained have won friends for us. The next time will not be so difficult - and there will be a next time until men are able to walk the streets as men and partake of full American citizenship.³¹³

Farrell Jones, another Lincoln student who editorialized these events, wrote,

I wonder where all of the democracy that everybody was hollerin' and screamin' about a couple of years back went. It seems to me that a lot of people did quite a bit of fighting and dying for something that doesn't exist, except on paper (the paper being some laws that don't seem to make much difference). Now there are some people who would have you believe that the time is not ripe or that it's not the fault of the 'decent people' (whatever that expression means). They tell you that it's the so-called 'hill-billies' who are causing all of the trouble. But if whoever is running this county and state had wanted the law to be enforced, it would have been enforced. Obviously the powers that be don't think much of you and me and don't care much about the Negro voters of this state. I hope the voters remember that the next time an election comes around. The Civil Rights Law has really turned out to be a "sham."³¹⁴

He continued,

We have tried just about everything now. We have had talks. We have been to the courts. We have publicized the injustices done to us and so far we haven't gotten very far. We haven't gotten very far because to these people the law doesn't mean anything. (There seems to be no one willing to enforce it.) There's no sense in appealing to their religious principles because these are obviously things not used outside of the place of worship. But there is one thing to which we have neglected to appeal - their pocketbooks. Of course it will cause some hardship on our part, but I think we are capable of bearing the burden. This can have a very great effect if we can get everyone to cooperate. I doubt if we can, but we should try. We spend an awful lot of money in that town. When a man starts bleeding through his pocketbook, he very often changes his social and political philosophies.³¹⁵

Both the unsigned and Jones editorials expressed outrage and and bitterness at the miscarriage of justice. Both also expressed insights which would inform Gayraud Wilmore, as well as the Civil Rights Movement in general, such as the limits of action through the courts and through appeals to white consciences, the long and drawn-out nature of the struggle to come, and the great potential for strategies which employed economic pressure, such as boycotts, to force white people to relent. Jones' editorial criticisms of the sentiment that "the time is not ripe," and of white moderates' attempts to blame more overtly racist white people for the lack of progress toward racial justice, also anticipated similar criticisms levied by Martin Luther King, Jr in his 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham City Jail." Jones also alluded to the particular bitterness of

black veterans who had fought overseas for democracy and against white supremacy, and yet continued to live in a society in which white supremacy reigned.

Later that same semester, Jacques Wilmore, fellow student Peyton Gray, political science professor John A. Davis, and President Horace Mann Bond appear to have engaged in further action, claiming to have been discriminated against by both Chris Vergis and Joseph Crowl on April 26.³¹⁶ The January 11 arrest of Jacques and other students became a major federal court case when the students sued theater owner Crowl and the arresting officers for allegedly violating federal civil rights laws, seeking \$45,000 in damages.³¹⁷ After a three-year legal battle, in June 1953 a judge ordered Crowl to pay \$500 in damages, and officers Johnson and Cox to pay \$50 each.³¹⁸ According to *Jet* magazine, the judge also ordered Crowl “to stop segregating Negro patrons and restrained town police from supporting the Jim Crow system.”³¹⁹ Jacques Wilmore recalled, “we filed three suits under the Pennsylvania [civil rights] law and lost all three even though they had signs saying ‘colored’ and ‘white,’” because grand juries were so unwilling to indict discriminators.³²⁰ Jacques did not mention the successful federal case in this interview, perhaps because it was a federal rather than a state case, and therefore did not face the same kinds of hurdles.³²¹ Also, in terms of strategy, Jacques said, “after we couldn’t find legal means [due to refusals to indict] to attack the problem we did sit-ins.”³²² However, the general picture of these events suggests that the Lincoln students used sit-ins as a strategy to secure bases for legal suits, so the two strategies may not have actually been separate from one another.

In the same 1968 interview, Jacques Wilmore lamented that “young people today don’t believe that we had demonstrations in 1948, 49, I have given up trying to convince them....,” adding that it seems “irrelevant” to them.³²³ In fact, the “Operation Oxford” was one of many

episodes in the early or “long Civil Rights Movement” of the 1930s-50s.³²⁴ For example, in 1943-44 Pauli Murray led other Howard University students in a successful sit-in movement in Washington, D.C.³²⁵ Glenda Gilmore argues that these were the first sit-ins in the South.³²⁶ Oxford, for its part, was a stone’s throw from the Mason-Dixon Line, and its own sit-ins, led by Milton Henry beginning in 1947, came only four years after Murray’s. The tactics of the 1942 re-organized Lincoln NAACP did not involve sit-ins, but did include James “Deac” Johnson’s provocative display of a noose on campus. In her own sit-ins, Murray used lesson plans from the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) to teach her fellow demonstrators about nonviolent direct action (NVDA).³²⁷ Murray had also read about the NVDA techniques of Bayard Rustin, which, she said, inspired her to attempt what she called the “stool-sitting technique.”³²⁸

Rustin, a black Quaker pacifist and West Chester, Pennsylvania native, experimented with sit-ins and other NVDA methods to desegregate the prison in which he was detained as a conscientious objector in 1944-46.³²⁹ He was a leader in the first “freedom rides” through the upper South in 1947, known as the “Journey of Reconciliation,” sponsored by FOR and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE).³³⁰ Rustin was also involved in an effort to desegregate public accommodations in Washington, D.C. in 1947.³³¹ Despite attention from the national black press, the national white press ignored Murray’s sit-ins, Rustin’s prison protests, the “Journey of Reconciliation,” and “Operation Oxford” - hence Jacques Wilmore’s lament at young people’s lack of awareness of the historical antecedents of the more famous 1960s SNCC-led student sit-ins.³³² Jacques did identify CORE as a pioneer in developing “nonviolent sit-in techniques,” but said “they weren’t popular, hadn’t caught on.”³³³

After Lincoln, Jacques “accidentally got involved in the Quakers,” through study at Haverford College and three years of working to integrate suburban housing for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in West Chester.³³⁴ The connections and/or parallels between the sit-ins led by the Quaker-associated Jacques Wilmore at Lincoln University in southeastern Pennsylvania, Murray’s FOR-inspired sit-ins at Howard University in Washington, D.C., and the West Chester, Pennsylvania Quaker and FOR staffer Rustin’s prison sit-ins and other demonstrations, reveal the importance of a mid-Atlantic, Mason-Dixon borderland, Quaker-HBCU network as central to the 1940s era of the Civil Rights Movement.

The 1953 court ruling against Joseph Crowl and the Oxford police officers did not end segregation in public accommodations in Oxford. Lincoln students and faculty would continue in anti-Jim Crow actions in Oxford for more than another decade, long after the departure of both Wilmore brothers from that community.³³⁵ However, both brothers learned valuable lessons from their activism at Lincoln, lessons which would inform them throughout their careers of racial justice leadership. Another of the faculty witnesses before the Grand Jury, economics professor Joel Dirlam, made a note in Jacques Wilmore’s student file during Jacques’ final year at Lincoln that read, “under situations of exceptional stress maintains unusual calm and presence of mind.”³³⁶ This was the sort of quality which Gayraud also noticed and admired in his younger brother, and which inspired him to follow suit.

¹ Eugene G. Turner, ed., *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore* (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999), p. 111.

² She grew up near the unincorporated town of James Store, on the border of Gloucester and Mathews Counties. Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111; Gayraud S. Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017; Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr., Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5526, Wilmore, Gayraud Stephen, Jr., ('47) ('50) S. Wilmore's application referred to his mother as being from "Gloucester, Va." Many of the Gardners eventually moved to Baltimore or to Maryland's eastern shore. Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

³ Charles Blockson has identified the formerly enslaved Godfrey Wilmore as founder of the town. Blockson wrote that fugitive slaves come to Cambria County from Maryland through Bedford County, that "Wilmore was founded and settled by a former Baltimore, Maryland slave, Godfrey Wilmore," and that the town of Wilmore "had several homes that served as stations on the Underground Railroad." Charles L. Blockson, *The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania* (Quantico, Virginia: Flame International, 1981), p. 139.

⁴ David Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed; Local town founded by ex-slave in 1805" (*The Tribune-Democrat*, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, February 28, 2016, accessed October 6, 2017, http://www.tribdem.com/news/wilmore-s-history-probed-local-town-founded-by-ex-slave/article_9ee31188-de96-11e5-a33b-9fb872d7d226.html); Ferdinand Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary, October 10, 1899: 1799-1899* (Cresson, Pennsylvania: Swope Bros., Printers, January 1, 1899), p. 38.

⁵ Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed."

⁶ Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed"; Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary*, pp. 38-39.

⁷ Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed."

⁸ Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed"; Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary*, p. 39.

⁹ This priest, Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, was Russian-born prince who became a Catholic priest and missionary in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Godfrey Wilmore died in 1815, and Mary Higgins in 1822. Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed"; Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary*, p. 39.

¹⁰ Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed"; Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary*, p. 39.

¹¹ The town was incorporated as "Wilmore" in 1859. The Wilmore family eventually dispersed, and the present-day town of 225 is now all-white according to the U.S. Census. Hurst, "Wilmore's history probed"; Kittell, *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary*, p. 39.

¹² Wilmore, Jr. also reported a family visit to Wilmore, Pennsylvania where, upon visiting the local Catholic Church, the priest recognized the visitors as Wilmores, apparently due to their resemblance to locals including in terms of skin tone, as the descendants of a black-white union. Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

¹³ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017; "Gayraud Wilmore, Sr.," *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 10, 1972, "Wilmore, G." folder, Chester County Historical Society.

¹⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, pp. 261, 263. Wilmore wrote that it was the first such post in the nation, but *The HistoryMakers* says it was the first in Pennsylvania. This post is still in existence, located near the corner of Ridge and Cecil Moore in North Philadelphia. "Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore," *The HistoryMakers*, June 21, 2004, accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-gayraud-wilmore>.

¹⁵ Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

¹⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

¹⁷ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.

¹⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017; Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 263; "Gayraud Wilmore, Sr.," *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 10, 1972, "Wilmore, G." folder, Chester County Historical Society. There are still "block captains" in North Philadelphia. In August 2017 I met with "Hakeem," block captain for the 1620-30 block of N. 26th Street, adjoining a block of Nicholas Street where the Wilmores once lived. Hakeem told me that his responsibilities as block captain included keeping the block clean and prohibiting fights on the block during school hours.

¹⁹ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 261; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

-
- 20 Though Wilmore, Sr. was “a Garveyite,” his son wrote, “I don’t think he strongly supported the idea of going back to Africa.” Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 21 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 22 Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.
- 23 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 262-263.
- 24 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 263.
- 25 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 263.
- 26 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 260.
- 27 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 260.
- 28 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 261.
- 29 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 260.
- 30 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 260.
- 31 Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.
- 32 Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017. Employment as an “office clerk” is mentioned in “Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore,” *The HistoryMakers*. No employment is listed for his father in the Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. Also, Wilmore’s undergraduate admissions application lists “Father’s Occupation” as “None at present. Expects [expects] speedy reinstatement.” Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr., Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5526, Wilmore, Gayraud Stephen, Jr., (‘47) (‘50) S.
- 33 Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, December 7, 1941, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr., Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5526, Wilmore, Gayraud Stephen, Jr., (‘47) (‘50) S.
- 34 “Gayraud Wilmore, Sr.,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 10, 1972, “Wilmore, G.” folder, Chester County Historical Society; Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Jacques Edward Wilmore, Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5527, Wilmore, Jacques Edward (‘50).
- 35 Wilson, “Living Witnesses,” p. 384.
- 36 Wilson, “Living Witnesses,” p. 384.
- 37 Wilson, “Living Witnesses,” p. 384.
- 38 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 261.
- 39 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, pp. 264-265. See also films, *In the Heat of the Night* and *They Call Me Mr. Tibbs!*, for Sidney Poitier’s portrayal of a Philadelphia police detective insisting, in the former film, on the use of his surname by a racist white Mississippi Sheriff.
- 40 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 41 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 42 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 43 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 44 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, pp. 265-266. Original text says “bothers [sic] in the faith.”
- 45 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 266.
- 46 Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 265.
- 47 Wilmore has described her as a “cook and laundry woman for white families downtown or in the suburbs.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017. Wilmore’s Lincoln student file lists her as a “domestic,” and his admissions application as a “domestic worker.” Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- 48 Gayraud Wilmore, “Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965,” in Malcolm Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand* (Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 248-252), pp. 251-252.
- 49 Hawkins became pastor of St. Augustine’s Presbyterian Church in the Bronx in 1938, at age 30. Frank T. Wilson, Sr. ed., *Black Presbyterians in Ministry* (New York: Consulting Committee on Ethnic Minority Ministries, Vocation Agency, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1978), pp. 33-34.
- 50 In Hawkins’ denomination, known in different periods as the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Presbyterian Church (USA), a moderator serves as a kind of ceremonial President of the denomination for a term of one or two years.

⁵¹ Relatedly, Danielle McGuire argues that key events in the genesis of the Civil Rights Movement included the defense of black women against rape and sexual violence by white men, and, therefore, the movement developed in part as a way to protect black women from violence and exploitation. Danielle L. McGuire, *At The Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance - a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 2010).

Jacques Wilmore's college admissions application, received on December 27, 1946, listed his mother's occupation as "Housewife," and his father's as "Clerk, Quartermaster Depot, 21st and Johnson St., Phila." Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Jacques Edward Wilmore, Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5527, Wilmore, Jacques Edward ('50). Therefore Wilmore, Sr.'s employment with the Quartermaster Depot, which he gained in the early 1940s, seems to have in fact provided her with the opportunity to cease her domestic work for other families, and shift into a more "traditional" homemaker role.

⁵² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁵³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017; Carol Tessein, "Alfred Gardner 'Apples' Wilmore," *Find A Grave*, October 11, 2012, accessed October 6, 2017, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=98689913>.

⁵⁴ Tessein, "Alfred Gardner 'Apples' Wilmore."

⁵⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁵⁶ "Jacques Wilmore 1," June 12, 1968, accessed October 6, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2IpRDTW8ZQ>. From the Mississippi Valley Collection at the University of Memphis. Digitized c. 2013, University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department. This comes from a 27-part interview (approximately 2.5 hours in total) on youtube with Jacques Wilmore, recorded in 1968; "People" (*Jet* Vol. 55, No. 23, February 22, 1979, p. 22).

⁵⁷ "Jacques Wilmore," *Legacy.com*, April 28, 2007, accessed October 6, 2017, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/philly/obituary.aspx?n=jacques-wilmore&pid=87595107>.

⁵⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁵⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶⁰ His admissions application lists him as having attended the "Kane School (Grammer [sic])," from age six in 1928 until graduation at age thirteen in 1935, when he entered Central High. Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶² Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 267.

⁶³ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 267. Through email, Wilmore has told a similar story: "Many of those whites had bought or rented their first homes in our neighborhood. At that time they spoke little or no English and I remember that we, playing school on the white steps outside, taught their children how to speak our language until they somehow learned how to say 'nigger' and that was the end of our friendship. Those who moved into our area just after debarking from their ships were mostly Irish or Eastern European immigrants who first settled in our part of town until their fathers found jobs and moved away to the white enclave served by the [Kane School]." Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017. Elsewhere, Wilmore has referred to these immigrants as Irish Catholics, saying, "... we had to fight Irish Catholic boys almost every day in order to get access to the playgrounds and ball fields of Fairmount Park." Wilmore, "Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations," p. 101.

⁶⁴ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 267.

⁶⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017; Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 268.

⁶⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁶⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁷⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁷¹ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr., Group 9, Box 45, Folder, 5526, Wilmore, Gayraud Stephen, Jr., (?47) (?50) S.; Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, January 4 and 6, 2017. A “Biographical Sketch of Gayraud S. Wilmore” in Wilmore’s student file says he graduated from high school in 1939, but that seems less reliable than Wilmore’s Lincoln student file, which says he graduated in June 1940.

⁷² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁷³ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

⁷⁴ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. The file indicates that Wilmore started at Central High and finished at Franklin High, both at the same address. Wilmore graduated in June 1940. A note next to “Central High” says “Continued in Franklin High with unforeseen complications in course,” perhaps referring to credits or course offerings lost in the change from Central to Franklin.

⁷⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁷⁶ Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁷⁷ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; “Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore,” *The HistoryMakers*.

⁷⁸ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁷⁹ “Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore,” *The HistoryMakers*.

⁸⁰ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁸¹ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁸² Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁸³ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁸⁴ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 4; Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, January 4 and 6, 2017; “Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore,” *The HistoryMakers*.

The HistoryMakers says this took place in his junior year, in 1937. However, the same website says that he graduated from high school in 1938, while his admissions application and his “certificate of recommendation” for admission to Lincoln, in his Lincoln student file, completed and signed by Franklin High’s “principal or superintendent,” both indicated that he graduated in June 1940. A “Biographical Sketch of Gayraud S. Wilmore” in his Lincoln student file, which is undated yet implies having been written during his 1946-47 senior year at Lincoln, said he graduated from high school in 1939, but his admissions application and “certificate of recommendation” seem like the most trustworthy sources here. Therefore if he really graduated in 1940, then his junior year would have been 1938-39. Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

In a 2017 email, Wilmore wrote that this took place during his “senior year at Central High,” and clarified later in the email that this was “in my senior year, at what became Benjamin Franklin High School,” thus indicating the 1939-40 school year. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

In an interview with Wilmore, he said that this event was a source of pride for Franklin High after Central’s departure, thus again affirming that this took place in 1939-40. Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

Of course, his admissions essay also said that he won the contest in his last year in high school. The evidence thus points strongly to 1939-40 as his senior year in high school, during which this contest took place. Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

In his 2004 book and in his 2017 email Wilmore wrote that the contest it was city-wide, but in his admissions essay he called it state-wide. The latter source is stronger here given its proximity to the actual event. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 4; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁸⁵ Elsewhere Wilmore wrote that he received “a handsome plaque and a five-year membership.” Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 4.

⁸⁶ Elsewhere Wilmore wrote that he “was invited to ride, with my astonished father, at the head of a parade down the Benjamin Franklin Parkway to Logan Square, across from the main library whose roof garden I haunted almost every day. My winning that essay contest was as much of a shock to the illustrious gentlemen of the Poor Richard Club as it was to me, a poor black boy from the mean streets of North Philadelphia.” Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 4.

With one exception, I was unable to find the records of any such contest at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, where some of the records of the Poor Richard Club are housed. That exception occurs in a book in their holdings, published by the Club in 1953: *The Poor Richard Club: Its Birth, Growth and Activities, and its Influence on Advertising, the City, State and Nation*, by Jack Lutz, President of the Club in 1929-30. Lutz wrote,

Beginning May 19 [1938] a three-day program was arranged by the Poor Richard Club... for the final dedication ceremonies of the Benjamin Franklin Memorial and the Franklin Institute.... pointed specifically at the unveiling of the \$100,000 heroic marble statue of Benjamin Franklin.... On May 21... the Hon. Josephus Daniels, Ambassador to Mexico, presented awards to the winners of the Essay Contest conducted by the Club on “What Franklin Did for America and for Us Who Live Today.” The top winner was Robert Fischer Maxwell, a 16 year old senior at Germantown High School. This contest was part of the “Youth Movement” fostered by the Poor Richard Club and was concluded by a parade of uniformed school bands on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The Poor Richard Club seized this opportunity to stage a banquet in Franklin Hall. Scientists, distinguished citizens representing leading countries of the world, personal representatives of the President of the United States, the Governor of Pennsylvania, the Mayor of Philadelphia - all were there; a fitting climax to a never-to-be-forgotten event and a full recognition of the Poor Richard Club of the yesterdays that made possible this dedication of today. This magnificent statue takes its place beside that other poem in stone - Abraham Lincoln in Washington; both inculcating pride in America through lives of achievement (Lutz, *Poor Richard Club*, pp. 148-150).

In none of the surrounding years is there any mention of such a contest. The chronicle of the 1939-40 year of the Club lists a variety of festivities, but no such contest (pp. 155-157). Perhaps the 1938 contest was the inaugural one of its type, and was held annually thereafter, but Lutz did not see fit to mention its subsequent iterations in his book. Perhaps racism prevented Lutz from mentioning Wilmore, matching Wilmore’s description of his selection coming as “a shock to the illustrious gentlemen of the Poor Richard Club” (Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 4). Wilmore’s general trustworthiness as a source on other matters, his recall of many specific details of this event, and the fact that he claimed to have won this 1939-40 contest as early as his 1940 admissions essay to Lincoln, combine to give me little doubt that it occurred roughly as Wilmore has described. Jack Lutz, *The Poor Richard Club: Its Birth, Growth and Activities, and its Influence on Advertising, the City, State and Nation* (Philadelphia: The Poor Richard Club, 1953).

⁸⁷ Elsewhere Wilmore wrote that, inspired by the beliefs and heritage of his fellow African Americans, “as a boy I yearned to be a believer, too, and I was baptized as a child and confirmed in the Christian faith while in high school, strangely enough, through readings in astronomy and metaphysics in the private library of the Benjamin Franklin Institute of Philadelphia.” Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁸⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁹⁰ Wilmore pronounces the name of the church with emphasis on the first syllable, as “MAC-Dowell.” Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

⁹¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

⁹² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 4, 2017.

⁹³ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 261. In Presbyterian denominations, presbyteries are regional church governing bodies, comprised of ministers and elders representing congregations from that region.

⁹⁴ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, pp. 261-262.

⁹⁵ Arthur E. Rankin, letter to Mr. Clarence E. Smith, May 5, 1939, Folder 120403b, McDowell Memorial Community PC (Philadelphia, Pa.), 1872-1939. Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁹⁶ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 262.

⁹⁷ Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 262.

⁹⁸ “The neighborhood in which I grew up would have been the poorer, more oppressed, and the meaner had it not been for this church of my youth. The uplifting influence and the constant prayers of that church brought me back from the Second World War in one piece - determined to make the Christian ministry my life’s vocation. Lesson number one: The black church is still the most precious possession of the African American people. Before our slave ancestors were permitted to have legal families in this country they had black religious gatherings - a proto-church - that shaped their personalities, their family life, and their emerging culture. Never give up on the church, my brothers, for as weak and as wrong as she can sometimes be, she is still God’s chosen vessel for the cultural, social, political, and economic salvation of the most lofty aspiration and the most fervent prayers of our churches.” Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 262.

⁹⁹ Letter, By order of the Board of Trustees. Edward W. McMullan, Secretary, Board of Trustees.” to the congregation of MMPC, April 24, 1937. Folder 120403b, McDowell Memorial Community PC (Philadelphia, Pa.), 1872-1939, Presbyterian Historical Society.

“The way now being clear, we recommend that Presbytery organize a Church to be known as the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Community Church in the building on the southeast corner of Twenty-first Street and Columbia Avenue until recently occupied by the McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church dissolved by Presbytery on June 21, 1937. The petition asking for this church has been signed by 222 adults. There are also 33 children who join in the request. The time of organization of the Church has been set for Friday evening, September 24, 1937.” “Report of the Committee on Berean Church and the McDowell Church Property,” September 20, 1937, “Committee on Berean Church and McDowell Church Property - Report to Presbytery 1937,” RG 168, Box 1, Folder 9, Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Philadelphia Presbytery Records, 1935-43, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁰⁰ *The Church Register of the McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America); Phila., Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Register, 1937-1938, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M32, Presbyterian Historical Society. The title page allows one to fill in the blanks between the words “The Church Register of the - Presbyterian Church of -.” Originally, the secretary/scribe used blue ink to write “McDowell Memorial” and “Philadelphia, Pennsylvania” in the blanks. Later, someone used pencil to place brackets around “Memorial” and add the word “Community,” to yield McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church. Therefore the new church seems initially to have kept the same MMPC name as the old church (or perhaps white officials assigned it the old name), but then changed the name to either MMCPC or, more likely, just MCPC. seems like it was first to be called MMPC, but then they changed it either to MMCPC, or, more likely, just to MCPC.

¹⁰¹ “The hearty and generous cooperation of the Trustees of Presbytery has resulted in an agreemnet [sic] regarding the use of the building at Twenty-first Street and Columbia Avenue. At the time of organization the new congregation is to assume the obligation for the interest payment on the mortgage indebtedness on the building amounting to \$9000.00. the necessary repairs are to be paid by the incoming congregation. The total expense of putting the building in first class shape will be over \$2500.00.” “Report of the Committee on Berean Church and the McDowell Church Property.”

See also, Clarence E. Smith, letter to the Rev. Wm. R. Craig, Gaston Presbyterian Church, June 17, 1937. This letter contains an “outline of the present indebtedness of the McDowell Mem. [PC] to date.” The church had made a minor payment recently to prevent foreclosure, and had not paid mortgage interest for two years. The letter also noted the \$2,500 mortgage on the church’s manse, as well as \$301.58 in “back taxes due.”

¹⁰² Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966), p. 215.

¹⁰³ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁴ Surely Murray was aware of McDowell Church itself, given his expertise, geographic proximity (as a professor at Lincoln University, about forty miles from Philadelphia), and the close links between Lincoln University and McDowell Church. However, perhaps Murray was unaware of the circumstances the founding of McDowell Church.

¹⁰⁵ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁶ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁷ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁸ James H. Robinson, *Road Without Turning: The Story of Reverend James H. Robinson, An Autobiography* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1950), pp. 190, 202, 220-228; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁹ Robinson, *Road Without Turning*, p. 138. Portions of this passage are also quoted in Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 216.

¹¹⁰ "Report of the Committee on Berean Church and the McDowell Church Property."

¹¹¹ "Roll of Trustees," *The Church Register of the McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America); Phila., Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Register, 1937-1938, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M32, Presbyterian Historical Society. All eleven original trustees were elected on September 24, 1937. Rice was listed first, and Wilmore second. The other original trustees were Alphonso Joseph Sr., Henry W. Gladden, Ralph Barrett, Robert Overton, T. C. Mitchell, Frank Gilchrist, J. Clifton Hamilton, U. Grant Hardy, and Cornelius Thompson. Rice and Wilmore, like most of the others, served from March 28, 1938 to April 12, 1939, so apparently there was a delay in the beginning of their terms. There is white-out under the dates for "record of service" for Rice and Wilmore, perhaps the only white-out on that page, so maybe there was some confusion about their terms.

¹¹² "Chronological Roll," *The Church Register of the McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America); Phila., Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Register, 1937-1938, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M32, Presbyterian Historical Society. "Charter members" are "original" members, those who are members as of the date of a church's founding. 222 people seem to have joined before January 1938, many of those on September 24, 1937, and ten more joined on January 23, 1938. On the page opposite the end of the list of the first 232 members is written, "List of Charter Members," so the church seems to have considered all 232, including those who joined in January, as charter members. Arthur Rankin's family also joined as charter members.

¹¹³ "Chronological Roll." John K. Rice is the only member listed with the title "Dr.," although there are two listed as "Rev."

¹¹⁴ "Chronological Roll."

¹¹⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

Session meetings on April 7, 1941 (p. 117), April 1, 1942 (p. 132), March 24, 1943, March 27, 1944, April 11, 1945, October 17, 1945, November 7, 1945, March 6, 1946, December 30, 1946, April 16, 1947, and November 17, 1948; Congregational meetings on April 8, 1942 (p. 134), April 7, 1942, April 7, 1943, March 29, 1944, April 11, 1945, April 3, 1946, and December 31, 1947. Page numbers only listed for pages which are numbered in the original.

Longtime Stated Clerk and Elder John J. Baker took over as superintendent to lead a reorganization of the Sunday School in the summer of 1945. However, Wilmore, Sr. was listed again as its leader in October of that year. Session meetings on June 20, 1945, July 25, 1945, and October 17, 1945.

At a 1947 meeting Wilmore, Sr. made the motion to raise the pastor's salary. Congregational meeting on December 31, 1947.

In 1949 John J. Baker was listed as the elder assigned to supervise the Sunday School, as a part of a longer list of elders supervising auxiliaries. This might have been a displacement of Wilmore, Sr., but more likely it was merely a formality, since Wilmore, Sr. was not an elder. Session meeting on June 14, 1949.

There was a dispute between Wilmore Sr. and another leader of the scouts, McDowell charter member and elder U. Grant Hardy, "concerning the choice of commissioners for the Troop," but it is unclear whether or how this was resolved. Hardy's name is listed twentieth on the charter member roll, just ahead of Rice and Wilmore, so the three of them may have been close associates. Session meeting on March 27, 1944.

"Elder Franklin stated that the Boy Scout Troop now meeting in the basement of the Church have become so disrespectful of the church property as to have damaged the partition walls in the basement, and are becoming otherwise objectionable because of unseemly behavior and unnecessary noise. The matter was discussed and it was decided that the session will call a conference of the leaders of the troop and invite the district officers in charge of this Scout district to sit with the Session in discussion of future troop activities in this church." Session meeting on December 29, 1949. Such concerns, of course, are typical around Scout troops.

All of these session and congregational meetings in *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

Note: In these minutes, the Sunday School was the largest auxiliary, followed by the Youth Church, and then by the Boy Scouts. The Boy and Girl Scouts combined would have formed the second largest auxiliary.

¹¹⁶ Session meetings on November 7, 1945 and September 11, 1946, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, congregational meeting on January 4, 1950, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹¹⁸ Congregational meetings on April 7, 1943 and April 11, 1945, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹¹⁹ Rankin was installed on November 23, 1937, and served until his retirement on March 26, 1950. He was succeeded by Walter D. Bowen on July 2, 1951. "Roll of Pastors, Associate Pastors and Stated Supplies," *The Church Register of the McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America); Phila., Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Register, 1937-1938, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M32, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹²⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹²¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, November 28, 2016 and January 6, 2017.

¹²² "Application for Admission," for "The Theological Seminary of Lincoln University," January 30, 1947, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017; Session meeting on May 6, 1949, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹²³ "The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester," church bulletin, June 30, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹²⁴ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, November 28 and 30, 2016.

¹²⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹²⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹²⁷ Original text says "among the first to join." Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹²⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹²⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹³⁰ See Clayborne Carson, "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African-American Social Gospel," *African-American Christianity: Essays in History*, ed. Paul E. Johnson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 161-163. See also Dickerson, *African American Preachers and Politics*.

¹³¹ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 163-195.

¹³² Hosting the Elks Lodge is referenced in minutes of the session meeting on September 24, 1941. DuBois spoke at McDowell Church on February 4, 1945. The church had realized that he was already planning to be in the area during that time, and so were able to convince him to add this event to his schedule. McDowell Church used the event as a fundraiser for church repairs. Session meetings on September 24, 1941, December 20, 1944, January 14, 1945, and January 17, 1945, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³³ Session meeting on April 16, 1947, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³⁴ Session meetings on June 18, 1947 and July 16, 1947. The church also sponsored screenings of the film *King of Kings* during Holy Week several times in the 1940s. Session meetings on February 11, 1942, March 21, 1945, and April 16, 1947, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³⁵ Session meeting on September 22, 1949, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³⁶ Session meetings on July 23, 1941, June 8, 1944, June 20, 1945, July 25, 1945, June 19, 1946, July 16, 1947, and July 14, 1948, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³⁷ The conferences were “sponsored by the Institute for Racial and Cultural Relations of the Presbyterian Church.” Wilmore, “Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations,” pp. 100-101.

¹³⁸ Session meetings on June 8, 1944, March 21, 1945, October 30, 1947, and February 3, 1950, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹³⁹ Session meetings on May 17, 1946 and June 19, 1946, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁴⁰ These records usually refer to the group as the “Afro-American Council.” Session meetings on September 24, 1941, September 12, 1945, October 17, 1945, December 12, 1945, September 11, 1946, October 6, 1946, November 13, 1946, September 10, 1947, September 29, 1949, and June 14, 1949, congregational meeting on January 5, 1949, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁴¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope*, revised ed. (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1998), pp. 45-46.

¹⁴² Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 46.

¹⁴³ “Lee graduated from the elite Philadelphia Girls High school (sister school to Central High...until both of them moved up to Oak Lane, became snooty and lost most of the Black and immigrant members of their ‘downtown’ student bodies).” Closed parenthesis) is absent in the original text. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁴⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁵¹ Lincoln student file and admissions application, for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. The “Biographical Sketch” included lists his typist and druggist’s clerk jobs as taking place between high school and college. It lists him as an “N.Y.A.” typist. The NYA was a New Deal agency.

¹⁵² “Lee’s stepfather worked for the Reading Railroad at the Reading Terminal in Philadelphia--where he also got me a job (before matriculation at Lincoln) transferring freight with heavy hand trucks, which proved to be more than my slim and non-athletic figure could handle and, after an inevitable accident, landed me a reassigned job as a night watchman the year I quit to join the Class of 1944 at Lincoln.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁵³ “Also I had a close friend whose father, Halley P. Johns, owned and operated a funeral home near my house and employed, during the summers, a Lincoln University student who happened to be planning to qualify for the ordained ministry in his denomination, the northern Methodist Church.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

In 1939 the northern Methodist Episcopal Church merged with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, to form the Methodist Church, a predecessor to the United Methodist Church. Wilmore no longer remembers the name of this student, but his identity is clear from other records. Wilmore listed Arthur Rankin as well as “John Dogget,” a current student at Lincoln, as friends who had attended Lincoln. This was undoubtedly John Nelson Doggett, Jr., a senior in 1941-42. Wilmore’s admissions application indicated that none of his family had attended Lincoln before. Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; *The Lincoln University Bulletin*, Vol. 42, No. 1, January 1941, *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-1941, Announcements for 1941-1942* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), p. 76. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

¹⁵⁴ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to Registrar Paul Kuehner, September 8, 1940; Registrar Paul Kuehner, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., September 10, 1940; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to Registrar Paul Kuehner, September 25, 1940; W. L. Wright, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., September 27, 1940. All in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁵⁵ “New Students” (*The Lincolnian*, March 10, 1941, p. 4); Registrar Paul Kuehner, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., October 16, 1940; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, December 18, 1940; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 27, 1940. Letters all from Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁵⁶ Wilmore, e-mail to the author, January 6, 2017.

¹⁵⁷ Wilmore, e-mail to the author, January 6, 2017. Wilmore’s student file also lists him as having a “Senatorial Scholarship” during his first two years there. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

“A scholarship to Lincoln University was awarded to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. by State Senator Harry Shapiro on Sept. 17, 1940.... Kindly inform me of the award as he is very anxious to enter during this semester.” Wilmore, Sr., letter to Kuehner, September 25, 1940, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

“I had always wanted to pursue an advanced course in English at Lincoln. Recently my chance came; a member of the State Senate of Pennsylvania informed me that he would recommend me for scholarship at the University. I am waiting for your reply with great anticipation.” Admissions application in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. The admissions essay is dated September 19, 1940.

“The College grants full tuition scholarships valued at \$350 annually to certain candidates nominated by members of the State Senate of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania students who make acceptable grades in the annual competitive tests given by the University, are recommended to their respective Senators for such scholarships.” *The Lincoln University Bulletin*, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1946-1947, Announcements for 1947-1948-1949* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), p. 62. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Wilmore had also considered going into the Merchant Marine. In fact, he has said that he “was just about to leave” with his close friend, Devereaux Tomlinson, when this Senatorial Scholarship came through. Tomlinson did indeed sign up and spend his career in the Merchant Marine. Gayraud S. Wilmore and J. Oscar McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording],” interview recorded December 23, 1981 and May 20, 1982 in Rochester, New York, 2 sound cassettes, housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

¹⁵⁸ Wilmore, e-mail to the author, January 6, 2017.

¹⁵⁹ Wilmore, e-mail to the author, January 6, 2017; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, December 18, 1940; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, August 17, 1941; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, December 7, 1941; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., December 12, 1941; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., March 25, 1942; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, May 16, 1942; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, June 10, 1942; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., June 11, 1942; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, July 12, 1942; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, August 25, 1942; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., letter to G. F. Birchard, undated, likely May 1943; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., June 18, 1943. All letters from Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶⁰ Wilmore, Sr., letter to Birchard, December 7, 1941. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶¹ Wilmore, Sr., letter to Birchard, August 17, 1941. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶² “Campus Has Sixty-Eight Students ‘On Their Stuff’” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, March 24, 1942, p. 4); *The 1942 Lion*, ed. H. A. B. Jones-Quartey (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Senior Class, Lincoln University, 1942), p. 53; “Alpha Phi Alpha,” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIII, No. 7, May 11, 1942, p. 2); “Dramatic Club” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIII, No. 7, May 11, 1942, p. 2), Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶³ “Several students have taken the initiative in the revival of a local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. They are encouraged by Dean Frank T. Wilson in this endeavor.... “Frosh Revive NAACP Chapter” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIII, No. 4, March 24, 1942, p. 1); “On Thursday, April 30, 1942, the Lincoln University Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People conducted an interesting program at the chapter which consisted of two speeches. The speakers were introduced by the instigator of the chapter, [its President] Mr. James Andrew Johnson. The first speaker was [its Vice-President] Mr. Gayraud Wilmore, who spoke on the history and activities of the N.A.A.C.P. During his speech he cited several instances whereby the N.A.A.C.P. proved itself a great asset to the Negro. He showed how the association grew and what caused its establishment. The account was vivid and examples given were many.” The other speaker, Godfrey H. Wilson, spoke about the poll tax. “NAACP’s Revival By Freshmen Off To Flying Start” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIII, No. 7, May 11, 1942). This “revival” fit a larger trend: NAACP membership “multiplied nearly ten times” during World War II. Harvard Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), p. 11.

¹⁶⁴ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶⁵ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

Rooks taught “Freshman Bible,” “Life and Significance of Jesus,” “Bible and Contemporary Social Problems,” and “Religious Elements in English Poetry.” *The Lincoln University Bulletin*, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 1941, p. 52; *The Lincoln University Bulletin*, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 1943, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1942-1943, Announcements for 1943-1944* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), pp. 46-47, Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

¹⁶⁶ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁶⁷ Lincoln student file and admissions application for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.,

¹⁶⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 6, 2017.

¹⁶⁹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁷⁰ Martin Kilson, *Transformation of the African American Intelligentsia, 1880-2012* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), p. 24.

¹⁷¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to J. Newton Hill, August 21, 1942. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. Wilmore went on, again, in English-major form: “I hope you and the family are well and have enjoyed a pleasant summer. I certainly have. I have spent many evenings at the Dell and the library and have grown a little, I think. Robinson Jeffers has been the source of much delight for me this summer and I have been spending some time with the French and American Decadents and Symbolists through texts by Arthur Symons and Oscar Cargill. I hope I have profited.”

Dean Hill replied with a different suggestion for how to avoid service:

“I want to inquire from your Local Board regarding the possibility of deferment so that we may bring you back to our campus as a student in the [ERC] this fall. If you are given the understanding that there is no possibility of your being called for induction prior to September 15th, then you have no cause for alarm. If the Board indicates, however, the possibility of induction prior to [then], write to me at once so that I may have the necessary papers forwarded for your immediate enlistment. This action will still permit you to return to Lincoln and pursue your studies here as a regular student either until graduation or until some sudden change in the war emergency alters the present War Department plans.” J. Newton Hill, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., August 22, 1942. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁷² J. Newton Hill, Liaison Agent ERC, to the Recruiting and Induction Office, U.S. Army, Philadelphia, September 2, 1942. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

¹⁷³ “ERC Takes Thirty-Seven: Presidents of Student Council, YMCA, Forum Are Among Those to Go” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, March 6, 1943, p. 1).

¹⁷⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁷⁵ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁷ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, p. 11-12.

¹⁷⁸ *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, ed. The Senior Class, Lincoln University (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1947), p. 37. This quote comes from the entry for Herbert Leon White, who is on the same page with Wilmore. Of White, it also said, “the 92nd vets say that he was one of Sam’s snafus.” White’s featuring on this page makes it clear that he did survive the war, therefore “unfortunate” referred to the call-up, rather than to his death.

¹⁷⁹ “Thinking back, I can recall many unpleasant incidents at Lincoln, but I also recall that the good ones far outweigh the bad... [list of various memories]... the regrets when the E. R. C. moved out and the night of March 3, 1943; ... the dreadful waiting for those long envelopes with ‘Greetings’ fro [sic] Uncle Sam; the tearful departure from Lincoln and the enthusiastic welcome by other vets upon return; the new quarters in Vetsville; ... - to me, Lincoln, these are ‘all the things you are...’” “Raising the Shade” (*The Lincolnian*, “Commencement Issue,” Vol. 19, No. 7, June 1, 1948, p. 2). The identity of the writer, a regular columnist, is unclear - he was nicknamed “The Shade.”

¹⁸⁰ Wilmore, e-mail to the author, November 30, 2016. I would classify neither King nor Cone as a pacifist.

¹⁸¹ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 66; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017; Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. The Combat Infantryman’s Badge is was awarded to all infantrymen who served in combat.

¹⁸² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁸³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

¹⁸⁴ Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

¹⁸⁵ Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, “When I Met God” (*The Lincolnian*, January 22, 1947, p. 4, poem originally written December 1944).

¹⁸⁶ Wilson, Sr., *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁸⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017; Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

¹⁸⁸ Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, “Mail Call: Pietrasanta, 1944,” *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, ed. The Senior Class, Lincoln University (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1947), p. 86.

-
- ¹⁸⁹ Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, "Hope for the Black Soldier: Cremona, 1945," *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, ed. The Senior Class, Lincoln University (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1947), p. 87.
- ¹⁹⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.
- ¹⁹¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.
- ¹⁹² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016. The Interchurch Center, sometimes known as the "God Box," at 475 Riverside Drive, was the site of the headquarters of the UPCUSA's Commission on Religion and Race (CORAR), and of other mainline church institutions like the National Council of Churches, in 1960s-70s.
- ¹⁹³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.
- ¹⁹⁴ Four certificates from the USC spell his first name in four different ways: Garaud, Gayrand, Gayrauds, and Gayraud. He completed these courses in September and October 1945. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ¹⁹⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017; Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.
- ¹⁹⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.
- ¹⁹⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017. This residence may have been at 833 D Jessup Place, Philadelphia 23, PA, because that is where his army educational records were sent in February 1946. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ¹⁹⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 69, 74-75.
- ¹⁹⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 74.
- ²⁰⁰ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.
- ²⁰¹ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.
- ²⁰² Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, p. 268.
- ²⁰³ Wilson, "Living Witnesses," p. 384.
- ²⁰⁴ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to Paul Kuehner, December 14, 1945; Paul Kuehner, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 28, 1945; Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to Paul Kuehner, January 26, 1946; J. Newton Hill, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., January 31, 1946. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ²⁰⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017; Hill, letter to Wilmore, Jr., January 31, 1946; G. F. Birchard, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., February 27, 1946. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ²⁰⁶ Birchard, letter to Wilmore, Jr., February 27, 1946. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ²⁰⁷ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to G. F. Birchard, December 14, 1945. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ²⁰⁸ Stephen Elliott was born in 1944 or 1945. The "Biographical Sketch" in his student file, which seems to have been written in 1946, said the child was two years old, but his student file itself says "1944? 45?" Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.
- ²⁰⁹ *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, pp. 37, 59, 67; Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; "Debaters at Va. State" (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6. March 29, 1947, p. 1); "The Archway: Delta Rho Forensic" (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6. March 29, 1947, p. 2); "Alpha Phi Alpha," (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6. March 29, 1947, p. 2). Wilmore was one of two students to represent Lincoln in one debate, whose topic was, "Resolved: That labor should have a direct share in the management of industry." "Debating Team Meets Florida in Randall." (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6. March 29, 1947, p. 4).
- ²¹⁰ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, pp. 37, 67.

²¹¹ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, pp. 37, 54-56.

Even as a seminary student, Wilmore remained connected to *The Lincolnian*. On May 22, 1948, participants in the “annual *Lincolnian* smoker” included “Dean and Mrs. Frank T. Wilson, Dr. Myron B. Towns, Mr. and Mrs. Gayraud Wilmore, Mr. J. B. McRae, Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Sullivan and little Stevie Wilmore....” Gayraud was noted as “last year’s Editor-in-Chief.” “Horace Dawson To Be Next Year’s *Lincolnian* Editor: *Lincolnian* Smoker Held” (*The Lincolnian*, “Commencement Issue,” Vol. 19, No. 7, June 1, 1948, p. 3).

²¹² Gayraud S. Wilmore, untitled letter, in “Vox Stude-” (*The Lincolnian*, March 1946, p. 4).

²¹³ Wilmore, untitled letter, in “Vox Stude-.”

²¹⁴ Wilmore, untitled letter, in “Vox Stude-.”

²¹⁵ Jeremiah 6:14, “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (NRSV).

²¹⁶ “The purpose of the conference was to discuss and propose methods attacking racial and religious discrimination on the Oleg campus. The atmosphere of the conference was set by a stirring address by Walter White, Executive Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, who decried the rise of racial and religious antagonism in America. Following the address Mr. White answered questions put by the audience. In reply to a question asked by Gayraud Wilmore, a Lincoln Delegate, as to the role of the Negro College in the conference, Mr. White replied that he felt that the Negro College should not exist and that as the purpose of the conference was to end discrimination the Negro College is an aspect of racial discrimination which is added [sic] and abetted by Negroes themselves.” “Lincoln Delegates at Swarthmore Confab” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1).

²¹⁷ “Most Drastic Step in University’s History” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1).

²¹⁸ “Frosh Revive NAACP Chapter”; “NAACP’s Revival By Freshmen Off To Flying Start.”

²¹⁹ “Most Drastic Step in University’s History.” For reference to the 1939 state law, see, “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 1); Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin, June 12, 1968, accessed August 4, 2019, published by Rhodes College, audio at <https://vimeo.com/281533400>, full reference information at <http://hdl.handle.net/10267/33845>.

²²⁰ “Students of NAACP Press Discrimination: Grand Jury Trials Scheduled for May” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1); Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin. Jacques Wilmore said of the Oxford Campaign, “we did sit-ins, just what that did in Greensboro in ‘44, 45, 46....” Therefore there may have been sit-ins in those years, or perhaps this list of years is in error, especially given that Jacques was not a student at Lincoln until 1947.

²²¹ “Students of NAACP Press Discrimination: Grand Jury Trials Scheduled for May.”

²²² “Operation Oxford in Review” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, pp. 1, 6), p. 6. This article, about 1950 events, also said, “The last attempt made by Lincoln University students to establish the Civil Rights Law ended in a ‘case dismissal’ in 1947. The reason given was ‘lack of evidence.’”

²²³ “Students of NAACP Press Discrimination: Grand Jury Trials Scheduled for May,” “Ominous Cars Follow Bus Back” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1); “Most Drastic Step in University’s History”; “Students Lauded on Anti-Jimcrow Fight” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 2).

²²⁴ Political Cartoon (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 2).

²²⁵ Wilmore was the likely author because 1) it referred to NAACP activities from the early 1940s (Wilmore had been an active NAACP officer at the time), 2) it recalled details from the “Intercollegiate Race Relations Conference” at Swarthmore, at which Wilmore had been a delegate, and most of all because of 3) the basic argument’s similarity to Wilmore’s later defenses of James Forman, 1965 Watts insurrectionists, and others. “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 2).

²²⁶ *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, p. 24.

²²⁷ *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, pp. 24, 66; “Students of NAACP Press Discrimination: Grand Jury Trials Scheduled for May.”

²²⁸ “Students of NAACP Press Discrimination: Grand Jury Trials Scheduled for May.”

²²⁹ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.” See also the 1942 *Lincolnian* articles, “Frosh Revive NAACP Chapter” and “NAACP’s Revival By Freshmen Off To Flying Start.”

²³⁰ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

²³¹ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

²³² “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

²³³ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

The 1947 *Lion* yearbook lists Henry with the superlatives of “Class Orator” and “Most Radical.” Under Henry’s 1947 yearbook photo is written, “Heavy boy, that Milt... “You’ve got to fight American Fascism wherever you find it”... Thorn in Dr. Bond’s side... scholarly, informed, eloquent... “Damn it Gay, I can’t catch you”... campus politician... will fight the chapel to the end... gravitates satellites... fixer of radios... campus movie operator... will succeed as barrister.” Another student’s photo page identifies the student, Stuart John Dunning, as a passionate NAACP activist, and refers to him as “Milt Henry’s hardy henchman.” Henry authored the class “Prophecy” - a comedic prediction of how select class members would turn out in the future. In it, Henry wrote, “Gayraud ‘Demosthenes’ Wilmore was busy chasing devils out of Philadelphia in droves, and saving souls by the thousands.” *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, pp. 21, 24, 82, 85. In other words, Henry was known as a radical, political, intelligent and popular figure, with a loyal NAACP following. Unlike Wilmore, he did not get along with the administration or support campus religious activities. He and Wilmore seem to have had both mutual admiration and some form of rivalry, and he saw Wilmore as, at least compared to himself, an intensely religious figure.

²³⁴ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

²³⁵ “jimcrow” appears to have been intentionally spelled in this manner. “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.” As previously mentioned, Wilmore was a delegate to this conference. The conference had also selected one of *The Lincolnian*’s staff reporters, Edward C. Booker, to be Lincoln’s representative on a temporary executive committee, including delegates from Cornell, Columbia, Swarthmore, Vassar, and Smith, tasked with writing the constitution for an Inter-Collegiate Board on Race Relations which the Swarthmore conference had created. “Lincoln Delegates at Swarthmore Confab.”

²³⁶ “The Oxford Problem - Past, Present, Future.”

²³⁷ “... I had been a member of the Young Communist League at Lincoln before going into the service, and I think maybe after returning, for those last two years. I was involved, with Milton Henry and some others, in the Young Communist League. As a matter of fact I represented Lincoln at some of the regional meetings in New York City. When the Communist Party was enticing young black intellectuals by plying them with very good looking Jewish girls at parties at the Daily World in lower Manhattan, and these college boys, from Lincoln and Howard and Cheyney, were introduced for the first time to interracial dating, in the context of the Communist Party, and thereby opening their minds to the possibilities of an integrated society, under Marxist domination.” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” Note, also, that the socialist Workers Defense League had been involved in the Oxford Campaign, as reported by *The Lincolnian* under Wilmore’s editorship: “For actively fighting jimcrow in a Williamstown, Mass., barbershop, Williams College students were congratulated by the Workers Defense League.... Rowland Watts, associated WDL secretary, wrote... ‘The WDL, which helped Lincoln University students fight jimcrow in Oxford, Pa., congratulates you and your fellow-students on your opposition to the jimcrow barbershop.’” “Students Lauded on Anti-Jimcrow Fight.”

²³⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²³⁹ See Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*.

²⁴⁰ “Vet Villagers Protest Removal of Stoves” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1).

²⁴¹ “Vet Villagers Protest Removal of Stoves.”

²⁴² Wilmore earned the Thomas W. Conway Prize in English, the Class of 1900 Prize in Debating, and the Ladies Auxiliary National Award. The Conway Prize was presented to a student “who achieves excellence in English and best ‘exemplifies the Christian qualities of honor, gentleness, courtesy, and unselfishness.’” The Class of 1900 Prize “awards ten dollars to that student who in the judgment of the Faculty has acquitted himself most creditably in the intercollegiate debates.” The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, pp. 63, 87; Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.; *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, p. 82.

²⁴³ The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, pp. 65, 87.

²⁴⁴ *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, p. 37.

²⁴⁵ Dr. Ralph Bunche was Director of the U.N. Trusteeship Council. Thurgood Marshall, Ralph Bunche, John H. Gross of Philadelphia, and George E. Davis of Charlotte, and Harry W. Greene of Charleston, West Virginia received honorary doctorates. Milton Galamison earned the Robert H. Nassau Prize (essentially the best seminary student). “Dr. Bunche to Speak at Commencement” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 1).

²⁴⁶ Margaret Ann Reid, “Waters Turpin (1910-1968), *Oxford Reference*, accessed August 4, 2019, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803110315860>.

²⁴⁷ The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, p. 27; *The 1947 Lion: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*, p. 67.

²⁴⁸ *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, ed. Frank T. Wilson, Sr., pp. 139-141.

²⁴⁹ *The Lincolnian* Vol. 18, No. 6, March 29, 1947, p. 2. Frank Wilson, Jr. is listed as a staff reporter on this page.

²⁵⁰ *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, ed. Frank T. Wilson, Sr., p. 141.

²⁵¹ *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, ed. Frank T. Wilson, Sr., p. 141.

²⁵² The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, pp. 44-45, 47.

²⁵³ “Frosh Revive NAACP Chapter.”

²⁵⁴ J. Newton Hill, letter to Paul Kuehner, February 5, 1947. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁵⁵ “Application for Admission,” for “The Theological Seminary of Lincoln University,” January 30, 1947. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁵⁶ “Application for Admission,” for “The Theological Seminary of Lincoln University,” January 30, 1947. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁵⁷ “Application for Admission,” for “The Theological Seminary of Lincoln University,” January 30, 1947. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁵⁸ The Dean of the Seminary [Jesse Belmont Barber], letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., June 23, 1947. Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁵⁹ “We are recommending Mr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, a student of the Junior class of the Seminary.” Wilmore seems to have already been working at the church as of Sunday, October 12. Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to the Rev. T. S. Dickson, First Presbyterian, York, PA, October 30, 1947.

Wilmore “is serving as student minister of the Faith Presbyterian Church at York, Pennsylvania. He goes to York on Saturday and returns on Sunday night or Monday morning of each week. By train York is approximately 100 miles from Lincoln University. As student minister he is in complete charge of the church there, doing pastoral visitation, preaching and directing the Sunday School and other religious activities.” Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to A. B. Chown, Chairman of the Eastern Clergy Bureau in New York City, January 6, 1948.

²⁶⁰ Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., August 19, 1949.

²⁶¹ The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, pp. 48-49; “Go to Church During Religious Emphasis Week” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 2). This article identifies members of the “Religious Activities Committee” as President Bond, Dean Barber, David Swift, Gayraud Wilmore, Walter Hundley (who was managing editor of *The Lincolnian*), and Philosophy Professor Walter Fales. Swift was a conscientious objector during World War II, involved with the American Friends Service Committee and Pendle Hill, and a variety of racial justice efforts. “David Everett Swift” (*The Hartford Courant*, October 17, 2001, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/hartfordcourant/obituary.aspx?n=david-everett-swift&pid=110948>).

²⁶² David E. Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).

²⁶³ Swift, *Black Prophets of Justice*, p. xiv.

²⁶⁴ “Apart from three or four Black professors who inspired me, the only teacher at Lincoln with whom I found a true kinship was my prof. of American history, Dr. Andrew E. Murray, who during my period wrote his magnus [sic] opus, *Presbyterians and the Negro - A History*.... The late Professor Murray was white and today deserves more credit and honor than either race has ever given him.” Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, September 1, 2017.

²⁶⁵ “News: Presbyterian Office of Information, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,” by Karl Johnson, revised/corrected version, 1983, RG 414, Series I, Biographical Vertical File, H5 Murray, Andrew E., 1917-1991, Presbyterian Historical Society; “Andrew Evans Murray: April 2, 1917 - October 14, 1991,” Insert in Funeral Bulletin, October 1991, RG 414, Series I, Biographical Vertical File, H5 Murray, Andrew E., 1917-1991, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁶⁶ Andrew E. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966). This book was published by the Presbyterian Historical Society, which also recognized Murray with its “1983 Distinguished Service Award.” “News: Presbyterian Office of Information, The United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.,” by Karl Johnson.

²⁶⁷ “Andrew Evans Murray: April 2, 1917 - October 14, 1991,” Insert in Funeral Bulletin, October 1991, RG 414, Series I, Biographical Vertical File, H5 Murray, Andrew E., 1917-1991, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁶⁸ “With the enrollment of three white students this semester, the Lincoln University Seminary became the only completely interracial seminary in the Presbyterian Church USA and possibly the first one in the history of American theological education. Lincoln’s Seminary - like others throughout the country - has had a partial interracial set-up for many years, but never before has it had both races represented at the same time on the trustee, faculty and student level, according to Dr. Horace Mann Bond, President of the University. One of the white students, Philip Ramer, attended the University of Denver and Rockmont College in Denver where he studied under Dr. Andrew Murray, father of Dr. Andrew Murray, dean of Lincoln’s Seminary. The others are Robert McKay and Albert Pierson, of Chester County, Pa., graduates of King’s College, who are now serving rural churches in the area. Dean Murray said that McKay and Pierson had visited the school prior to enrollment and were apparently impressed with the friendliness that prevailed - in addition to the fact that the campus was near their homes.” “Seminary Now Interracial” (*The Lincolnian*, vol. 23, no. 4, March 24, 1952, p. 5).

²⁶⁹ Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, May 24, 1963, Volume for March 3, 1960 - September 27, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

See also Murray’s concerns about black bitterness towards and racial prejudice against white people, saying, “the greatest evil racial prejudice has done is to distort the thinking of those who have been its victims,” leading to a “resentful self-righteousness,” and saying, “it is so discouraging to see hatred eating away at the lives of people. Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, January 12, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

See also Murray’s criticism of the fact that “the old leadership [of Civil Rights organizations] insists on the same militancy which was adapted to the time of open conflict.” He added, again in the spirit of white moderate colorblindness, “Negroes must stop being Negroes and become people.... There will still be problems, but they will be human problems, not racial problems.” Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, February 9, 1963, Volume for March 3, 1960 - September 27, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁷⁰ Murray, Diary Entry, May 24, 1963.

²⁷¹ Murray, Diary Entry, May 24, 1963.

²⁷² Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, August 26, 1963, Volume for March 3, 1960 - September 27, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁷³ Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, August 29, 1963, Volume for March 3, 1960 - September 27, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁷⁴ “I have been reading the works of Francis J. Grimké, a Lincoln graduate and an outstanding Presbyterian minister in Washington. Perhaps there is no greater indictment of the hypocrisy of Christians in the matter of race than his remark in 1920 that though he had been a minister in Washington since 1878 only one of his fellow white pastors had invited him to occupy his pulpit in all those years. This was in a Church which believed in the parity of the clergy! Yet Francis Grimké was probably the intellectual superior of any man in the Presbytery. A graduate of Lincoln and of Princeton Seminary he never felt at home in either institution, since their racial policies did not measure up to his high standards. There is something ironical about a man being so rejected by his contemporaries, a man who was so Presbyterian in attitude. He was called the ‘Black Puritan,’ because of his strict morality. He was an earnest advocate of temperance and a life-long Republican. He would never compromise, however, on his demands for equality and in his struggle he did not spare either his Church or his Alma Mater.” Andrew E. Murray, Diary Entry, August 30, 1963, Volume for March 3, 1960 - September 27, 1963, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

On the other hand, Murray was unusually sensitive to African American justice concerns, even for a white liberal, as seen a 1952 journal entry in which Murray referred to Jesus’ crucifixion as a “‘legal’ lynching.” Andrew E. Murray, “John 19:1-15,” Diary Entry, February 7, 1952, Journal 1, 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

²⁷⁵ His diary entry about the march did not reference his own attendance, therefore it seems unlikely that he was there.

²⁷⁶ Gayraud Wilmore, letter to Mrs. Dorothea Murray, October 16, 1991. The Wilmores lived in Atlanta at the time.

²⁷⁷ The Dean of the Seminary, letter to Wilmore, Jr., June 23, 1947.

²⁷⁸ Mark Wild, *Renewal: Liberal Protestants and the American City After World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019), p. 51.

Of his work at the Labor Temple, Wilmore said, “I, for one, am being introduced to a whole new sphere of thinking - my relation, as a minister, to working people, I don’t mean that I have been oblivious of any connection, but that I suppose I have been taking labor unions, the problems of city housing, city economics, urban migration, etc., all pretty much for granted. I don’t think I will regard them in quite the same way again.” Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., letter to Jesse Belmont Barber, June 9, 1949.

Barber wrote to Wilmore, “I trust that you are continuing to move apace on your work of evangelizing the migrants....” Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., August 19, 1949.

Wilmore described his experience to Barber, saying, “when you read this brief note in the plush luxury of your office overlooking the broad stretch of Lincoln’s green and meticulously trimmed lawns, I - poor half-forgotten missionary that I am - will probably be laboring, amid the reeking debris of a ramshackled migrant camp, on the wild frontier of Bucks County....” Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., letter to Jesse Belmont Barber, August 23, 1949.

²⁷⁹ “We are recommending Mr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, a student of the Junior class of the Seminary. Mr. Wilmore (A.B. Cum Laude Lincoln University ’47) is one of our most outstanding students intellectually and spiritually, and I have no doubt but that he will render a most acceptable service.” Barber, letter to Dickson, October 30, 1947.

²⁸⁰ Caution, Tobias, Marshall, Spann, and Nelson spoke and/or were honored at least twice at Lincoln in the 1940s, White and Hawkins at least three times, and Robinson at least four times. The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 46, No. 1, January 1941, pp. 5, 15; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 48, No. 1, January 1943, p. 8; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 1944, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1943-1944, Announcements for 1944-1945* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), p. 8, Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 50, No. 1, January 1945, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1944-1945, Announcements for 1945-1946* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), p. 8, Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, pp. 10, 83, 85; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 53, No. 1, January 1949, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1948-1949, Announcements for 1949-1950-1951* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), pp. vii, 87, Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Caution was President of the Alumni Association and Langston Hughes was its Historian. The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 49, No. 1, January 1944, p. 82.

²⁸¹ Horace M. Bond, "Lincoln Triumphs in Nigerian Elections" (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 23, No. 4, March 24, 1952, p. 1). See also Ralph C. Nwakoby, "Lincoln Student Speaks At Oxford Hotel" (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 23, No. 4, March 24, 1952, p. 2). For race relations week on Sunday February 10, the Oxford Rotary Club invited a Lincoln student to the Oxford Hotel to give a speech. The student was Kalu Ezera, of Nigeria. Ezera's speech, "West Africa in Our World," chronicled Lincoln's role in de-colonizing West Africa, with particular attention to the work of Azikiwe and Nkrumah.

²⁸² Cassandra Zenz, "Milton A. Galamison (1923-1988), *BlackPast*, September 11, 2019, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/galamison-milton-1923-1988/>.

²⁸³ "Rev. Dr. Maurice J. Moyer," *Congo Funeral Home*, 2012, accessed August 4, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140306181005/http://obit.congofuneralhome.com/obitdisplay.html?id=1039969&listing=Current>.

²⁸⁴ Barber, Murray, Samuel G. Stevens, and McLain C. Spann also participated in Moyer's ordination service, which was held at Mary Dod Brown Memorial Chapel, on Lincoln's campus. Barber preached the sermon. Barber had pastored the church in Chattanooga, TN attended by Moyer's family. Moyer was a Navy veteran of World War II. "Seminarion Ordained" (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 23, No. 4, March 24, 1952, p. 5).

²⁸⁵ Maurice J. Moyer, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., April 7, 1964, "Moyer, Maurice Jefferson, letter to Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore Jr., concerning the Chester demonstrations and civil rights struggle," MS M874c, Presbyterian Historical Society; "Rev. Dr. Maurice J. Moyer," *Congo Funeral Home*.

²⁸⁶ In other words, all of Wilmore's key African American minister associates and mentors were active in the Council of the North and West. Murray and Swift were white, and Turpin and Hill were not clergy.

²⁸⁷ "To Be Installed Wednesday" (*The New York Age*, October 2, 1943, p. 9, accessed August 4, 2019, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/1735191/shelby_rooks_installed_as_minister_of/).

²⁸⁸ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 21, 2016. See also, "Seminary Active" (*The Lincolnian*, "Commencement Issue," Vol. 19, No. 7, June 1, 1948, p. 6). "On April 18th the following members of the Seminary gave sermons at the annual Seminary Day celebration: Caesar Coleman, Otis J. Wynn, Charles Rowett, Edward Miller, Gayraud Wilmore and Dean Barber and Rev. Nelson who concluded the program. Many of the Seminary students will be busy this summer with duties of social service. Mr. And Mrs. Gayraud Wilmore will be with the Home Missions, Council of North America," other students were involved in other work with migrants, chaplaincy, evangelism, religious education, preaching, and Vacation Bible School, through the eastern United States.

²⁸⁹ Lincoln student file for Jacques Edward Wilmore, Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5527, Wilmore, Jacques Edward ('50).

²⁹⁰ Prior to Lincoln, he had also been active in the Boy Scouts and at McDowell Church, including as President of its Youth Church. Lincoln student file for Jacques Edward Wilmore.

²⁹¹ Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

²⁹² J. Newton Hill, letter to Jacques E. Wilmore, June 1, 1950; “Official Transcript of the Record of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore,” Lincoln Theological Seminary, March 23, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. “Rates First in a Class of Seven.” Gayraud earned straight A’s in his second and third years.

Note: The volume of Lincoln’s catalogue which would include the 1950 commencement is missing from the institutions’ archives.

²⁹³ Jacques E. Wilmore, letter to the Registrar, Lincoln University, January 20, 1947. “I would like to be assigned to a room in Veterans Village.... My brother is now living there with his family and I would like to be housed near him.”

²⁹⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

²⁹⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

²⁹⁶ “Operation Oxford In Review.”

²⁹⁷ “Operation Oxford In Review.”

²⁹⁸ “Operation Oxford In Review”; “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges.” Holman was from Bloomfield, NJ, and Anderson from New York City. Gayraud was identified as “of West Chester,” pointing to the fact that, while still a Lincoln student, he was also already serving as pastor of Second Presbyterian in West Chester at the time (see Chapter 2). Holman was sports editor for *The Lincolnian*, where Jacques Wilmore was a staff reporter. *The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 2. The students are identified thusly on the masthead on this page.

²⁹⁹ The other students were Archibald Seales, Luther Manning, and Vernel Dieudonne. “‘Oxford Case’ Trial Postponed” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 23, No. 4, March 4, 1952, pp. 1-2), p. 1; “Theatre Owner, Two Policemen On Trial for 1950 Incident” (*The Lincolnian*, November 1, 1952, pp. 1, 5,) p. 1. This article was provided by Richard Winchester from an online source accessed on June 12, 2012.

³⁰⁰ “Operation Oxford In Review.” “The fifth student was fined \$10.00 for disorderly conduct, having snapped a flashbulb picture in the Oxford Theatre.” Since a similar number of students were charged after visited the theatre on January 11, it is possible that this article mistakenly conflated the January 11 charges with demonstrations at other establishments on January 16 and 17.

³⁰¹ Jacques seems to have been involved in such demonstrations over the course of several years, and he does not tie these comments to any particular phase of those demonstrations. In other words, he could well have been referring more to the 1947 sit-ins than the 1950 sit-ins in these comments. Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

³⁰² “NAACP Rally in Philadelphia, Pa.” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 1).

³⁰³ “NAACP Rally in Philadelphia, Pa.” See also “NAACP’s Revival By Freshmen Off To Flying Start,” which said of the 1942 event, “The first speaker was Mr. Gayraud Wilmore, who spoke on the history and activities of the N.A.A.C.P.”

³⁰⁴ “NAACP Rally in Philadelphia, Pa.”

³⁰⁵ “NAACP Rally in Philadelphia, Pa.”

³⁰⁶ “NAACP Rally in Philadelphia, Pa.” The event was held at the Vine Memorial Church. Other speakers included “Congressmen Barrick, Granada, and Chudoff, Philadelphia; FEPC director Loescher, Assemblyman Rhodes, NAACP Attorney Williams, and Educational Equality League president Logan.” “Mr. Granada said, ‘It is regrettable that on Lincoln’s birthday those who attend the university bearing his name must suffer that which [sic] he fought against.’ Rhodes was most dynamic in demanding that we do not tolerate ‘Bilbo’s Mississippi, Talmadge’s Georgia, nor Duff’s Chester County.’” James H. Duff was the sitting Pennsylvania governor at the time, though he ran successfully for U.S. Senate that year instead of for re-election.

³⁰⁷ “Claptrap - A Study in Fascism” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 2). This article consists of “excerpts from a letter written by W. Henry MacFarland, Jr. of the Nationalist Action League.” In explaining why it published these excerpts, *The Lincolnian* wrote, “Neither the Administration, nor *The Lincolnian* considers this accusation serious enough to refute. The character and integrity of the members of the campus chapter of the NAACP and the intelligent manner in which the campaign for Civil Rights has been held speak for themselves. This article was printed because it affords an interesting study in Fascistic propaganda and employs a technique not unlike that of Klan organizations.”

308 “Claptrap - A Study in Fascism.”

309 “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges.”

310 “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges”; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

Crisis identified Vergis as owner and Crowl as manager of their respective establishments, although *Jet* referred to Crowl as owner. *Crisis* also said, “Students and faculty at Lincoln expressed resentment over the results of the trial, and promised further action to eliminate segregation in Oxford.” “What the Branches Are Doing: Pennsylvania” (*The Crisis*, Vol. 57, No. 4, April 1950, pp. 247-52), p. 250-51; “Lincoln U. Students Win Movie Fight” (*Jet*, Vol. IV, No. 7, June 25, 1953, p. 21).

311 “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges.”

312 Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

313 “Secret Weapon” (*The Lincolnian*, Vol. 21, No. 5, February 25, 1950, p. 2).

314 “Secret Weapon.”

315 “Secret Weapon.”

316 This report said that a Chester County grand jury refused to indict Vergis and Crowl for discriminating against these individuals on April 26. It is unclear whether this was a second grand jury convened after the April 26 incident, or whether *The Crisis* was conflating the grand jury’s February 20 decision with an additional April 26 action by Jacques Wilmore, President Bond, and others. “College and School News” (*The Crisis*, vol. 57, no. 10, November 1950, p. 660-69), p. 664.

317 The federal suit against Joseph G. Crowl and the two police officers, H. L. Johnson and Townsend Cox, was scheduled to come before the court on November 3, 1952. It had previously been set for February 5, 1952, but was postponed at the request of Lincoln’s student chapter of the NAACP because of the unavailability of one of the student witnesses, Vernel Dieudonne, who by that time was a student at Meharry Medical School in Nashville, TN. Jacques Wilmore was identified in this article as working on the Race Relations Staff of the American Friends Service Committee. Two of the other students were identified as Archibald Seales and Luther Manning in both articles. “Theatre Owner, Two Policemen On Trial for 1950 Incident”; “‘Oxford Case’ Trial Postponed,” p. 1.

318 “Lincoln U. Students Win Movie Fight.”

319 “Lincoln U. Students Win Movie Fight.”

320 Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin. The three state cases filed in which grand juries refused to indict appear to be the 1947 case from the Milton Henry days, the case regarding the January 11, 1950 arrests, and the case regarding the April 26, 1950 alleged discrimination against Jacques Wilmore, President Bond, and others.

321 Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

322 Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

323 Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

324 See Hall, “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.”

325 Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, p. 369; Sarah Azaransky, *The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 4; Anne Firor Scott, ed., *Pauli Murray & Caroline Ware: Forty Years of Letters in Black and White* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p. 20. See also Rosenberg, *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*.

326 Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, p. 388.

327 Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, p. 389.

328 John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), p. 56.

329 Jerald Podair, *Bayard Rustin: American Dreamer* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009), p. x; Michael G. Long, *I Must Resist: Bayard Rustin’s Life in Letters* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012), p. 13.

330 Podair, *Bayard Rustin*, p. x; Long, *I Must Resist*, pp. 92-94, 96.

331 Gilmore, *Defying Dixie*, pp. 390, 392; Long, *I Must Resist*, p. 104.

332 Long, *I Must Resist*, p. 101.

³³³ Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

³³⁴ Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin.

³³⁵ “In this period the last vestiges of institutionalized Jim Crow came under assault from the students and staff of Lincoln University. The Oak Theater ended its practice of seating African Americans only in the balcony, and the other movie house in town closed rather than integrate. After a week of peaceful picketing in the fall of 1961, the Oxford Hotel finally relented and integrated its facility.” Dick Winchester, “History Minute for September 26, 2004: Richard J. Oman Comes to O.P.C.,” *The History Minutes, Presented Weekly During the 250th Anniversary, Oxford Presbyterian Church, 1754-2004*, pp. 47-48.

³³⁶ “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges”; Lincoln student file for Jacques Edward Wilmore. A note in this file under “4th Year” says “under situations of exceptional stress maintains unusual calm and presence of mind.” The handwritten name is unclear, but could easily be “Dr. Dirlam.”

CHAPTER 2

EARLY MINISTRY AND SCHOLARSHIP

West Chester Pastorate and School Desegregation

Becoming a Pastor

In news coverage of the December 1949 sit-ins at the Oxford Hotel Coffee Shop and the Oxford Theater by the Wilmore brothers and two other students, Gayraud Wilmore was identified as “of West Chester, Pennsylvania” - a town which was twenty-five miles from Lincoln, halfway between the university and Philadelphia.¹ In fact, while Wilmore was taking courses in his final year at Lincoln’s seminary, teaching New Testament Greek, and working with his brother on the Oxford Campaign, he was also pastoring a church in West Chester.² In October 1949 he had begun serving as part-time, temporary pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in that city.³ Dean Barber was instrumental in securing his appointment there, a position which would eventually become permanent.⁴

Wilmore seems to have chosen Second Presbyterian over the pulpit of his own McDowell Church. In May 1949, several months before Barber’s inquiries in West Chester, Arthur Rankin told the leadership of McDowell Church that he and Wilmore had discussed the possibility of the latter succeeding the former as McDowell’s pastor. Rankin reported that Wilmore “would consider such a call after his graduation” and after Rankin’s September 1949 retirement.⁵ Rankin ended up staying on until March 1950, but Wilmore did not succeed him, although he was licensed and, later, ordained as a minister at his home church (to serve at Second Presbyterian).⁶ In fact, ordaining Wilmore was, essentially, Arthur E. Rankin’s last act as a pastor. Wilmore’s

ordination took place on March 26, 1950, the same date the church had set as the effective date of Rankin's retirement. *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* reported on that date that Wilmore's ordination was scheduled for that evening, including the news that Rankin, "pastor of McDowell Church for 13 years, will retire after tonight's service."⁷

Wilmore accepted a permanent call to Second Presbyterian in West Chester, and was installed as pastor there on June 30, 1950, several weeks after his seminary graduation.⁸ It is not clear why Wilmore chose Second Presbyterian over McDowell (if indeed he received an offer from McDowell). Wilmore may have simply preferred, and perhaps also been encouraged thusly by Barber and others, that his first call not be his home church.

Wilmore received strong support from his mentors while in this pastorate. Jesse Belmont Barber preached and Arthur Rankin gave a prayer at his installation service.⁹ Wilmore sent newspaper articles about his pastorate and preaching to Dean Barber and President Bond, to which they responded with praise.¹⁰ Barber also sent Wilmore financial contributions.¹¹ Several of Wilmore's professors were also active members of the Presbytery of Chester, the regional church body which included Second Presbyterian, so Wilmore had occasion to interact further with them in those regional church meetings.¹² Wilmore would need their continued support, because the sit-ins of Operation Oxford had already given him a taste of what John Lewis would later refer to as "good trouble," and he was headed for more "good trouble" in West Chester.¹³

School Desegregation

Gayraud Wilmore arrived in West Chester as hard-charging, activist minister, inspired by the example of his younger brother. Gayraud wrote, "it was because of Jack and his student

NAACP chapter... that I was forced to meld the rising Black Consciousness struggle for human and civil rights, with the quasi-conservative but justice-seeking theology of Lincoln's college and theological seminary," as I began "proclaiming the Gospel" in West Chester.¹⁴ Of this fraternal influence, he recalled, "That's where my interracial radicalism came from," "those hectic years shaped my radicalism and civil rights activism for the last quarter of that revolutionary century."¹⁵

Only four days after Jacques' January 11, 1950 arrest in Oxford, a forum was held twenty-seven miles away at Second Presbyterian - then pastored by Gayraud Wilmore - on the need for a local NAACP chapter.

A large and enthusiastic audience of young people heard a panel of speakers discuss the topic "West Chester Needs the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People" last night at the Second Presbyterian Church. It was the second in a current series of Youth Forums sponsored by a group of West Chester young people, Mrs. Valerie Overton was moderator. A teacher in the Gay Street School Miss Helena Robinson, spoke on the necessity of early, unsegregated elementary education for a citizenship which respects minority rights.¹⁶

Helena Robinson was a major leader in local school desegregation efforts, and an uncompromising, defiant "pillar of fire." Fellow local activist and beauty shop owner Mercedes Biddle Greer has said of Robinson, "Helena was the one who opened the doors," noting that Robinson's activism occurred in the face of serious risks to her employment, and saying, "you couldn't be outspoken. You were considered a troublemaker."¹⁷ Robinson had pushed successfully for some incremental school desegregation in 1943-44, but "at considerable cost."¹⁸ According to Greer, "she was really out there, and she took a beating for it."¹⁹ Robinson was a history teacher, a graduate of Howard University, and in the words of one student, "a fantastic lady."²⁰ In her teaching "she communicated a heritage of resistance and hope, emphasizing the

abolitionist movement over slavery, the support of some whites over the depredations of others.”²¹ Robinson had actually taught Bayard Rustin when he had been a student at the local all-black Gay Street School decades earlier. Rustin himself recalled that “she taught the underground railway in a very creative way,” remembering that she had taken classes to visit Quaker homes which had been stops on the Underground Railroad, to show them “the hidden areas and hidden rooms and the cellars dug out.”²²

The article on the pro-NAACP forum at Second Presbyterian continued:

Miss Janice Black discussed discriminatory practices in West Chester youth activities connected with the YMCA. Facts concerning covert unfairness in job placement and upgrading in the Civil Service system were disclosed by Warner Durnell. Miss Della Stonewell spoke on Broad measures aimed at improving the whole community.²³

Warner A. Durnell was one of the first African American mail carriers for the West Chester Post Office.²⁴ Durnell was a college graduate and World War II veteran, but, according to his son, “he could not find a teaching job at the middle school or high school level in the entire county he had grown up in because he was black.”²⁵ Della Stonewall later married Warner A. Durnell’s nephew, Carl E. Durnell, Jr., who became the first African American police officer in West Chester.²⁶

The article concluded:

The main topic was pointed up by two NAACP youth leaders from Lincoln University, Jacques Wilmore and Roscoe Wisner who emphasized the advantages of youth social action in West Chester through the youth Council of the NAACP. At the conclusion of the meeting the audience participated in open discussion and steps were taken to surevy [sic] the prospects for organizing.²⁷

While the article did not mention Gayraud Wilmore, he must have been closely involved in organizing the forum. In addition to serving as pastor of that church and brother of one of the forum’s leaders, Gayraud also served as adviser to the group of young adults responsible for the

series of Youth Forums of which this event was a part.²⁸ Gayraud had also participated, with his brother, in NAACP-sponsored sit-ins in Oxford less than three weeks earlier.

The young men of Lincoln, including the new, young, militant pastor of Second Presbyterian, who were all in the midst of a heated sit-in campaign in nearby Oxford, had joined forces with the youth and their elders in West Chester, including respected, courageous community leaders in education, business, and police and postal work like Helena Robinson and members of the Durnell family. Together they strategized about a broad set of racial justice problems in their community. This was the beginning of a transition of Gayraud Wilmore's focus from Operation Oxford to a campaign to desegregate schools in West Chester.²⁹

West Chester was a segregated community in the mid-twentieth century.³⁰ According to Mercedes Biddle Greer, many African Americans worked in "menial jobs, with substandard wages," and went "without electric lights or indoor flush toilets... when whites in the borough were buying television sets and dishwashers."³¹ African Americans were "chased from white stores and restaurants" and "relegated to the balconies of the movie theaters."³² Bayard Rustin recalled,

Sitting on the side of one theater, sitting upstairs in another, not being able to get food at restaurants, not daring to go into toilets in the center of town, the feeling you had to go home to go to the toilet, where the white kids would go into the restaurants to go, or the shops.... we knew we were not welcome.³³

However, according to historian John D'Emilio, and as evidenced by the forum at Second Presbyterian, "discrimination bred community solidarity" among the black citizens of West Chester.³⁴ Activists worked together to desegregate public establishments.³⁵ Employment discrimination, "especially in banks with all-white tellers, also became a rallying point."³⁶

African American parents expressed concern about a shortage of role models for their children, given the all-white faculties in some secondary schools where black children attended.³⁷ At the elementary level, all black students attended the Gay Street School, while the other schools (High Street, Biddle Street, and Auditorium) served only white children.³⁸ The city had only one public high school, which was desegregated largely because there were not enough African American students to justify a separate school.³⁹ In 1943-44, activists led by Helena Robinson successfully lobbied to move the seventh and eighth grades from Gay Street to the local junior high, thereby desegregating the latter.⁴⁰ The elementary schools remained fully segregated until 1947, when an African American parent, Charles Porter, refused to send his son to Gay Street, noting his residence's close proximity to the Auditorium School.⁴¹ Despite a truancy charge, Porter insisted, "whenever you accept my son [at the Auditorium School], I will send him... But I will not send him to a totally segregated school over on Gay Street. It's threatening on my child's life. I cannot allow my child to go across town, across High Street traffic."⁴²

Backed by the state superintendent of schools who said that Porter's son was in fact required to attend the Auditorium School because of his address, Porter fought the local school board until it relented later that year, agreeing to allow any black students zoned for previously all-white schools to attend those schools, and to add black student teachers to formerly all-white schools.⁴³ However, Gay Street's student body remained segregated, as did the all-white faculties of the junior high and high school.⁴⁴ Also, while Porter's son did enroll in the Auditorium School and *de jure* elementary school segregation seemed over, the High Street [Elementary] School remained all-white, and newcomers had the impression that segregation remained the unwritten

law at the elementary level, despite the Porter exception. Employment discrimination in schools also continued to rankle local African Americans. Furthermore, the school board retained the ability to set school zones along racial lines, and even to make exceptions to those lines for white students. According to Miller, Gay Street's early 1950s lines "were carefully drawn so as not to include white neighborhoods."⁴⁵ White students zoned for Gay Street were permitted to attend other elementary schools instead, thus keeping Gay Street all-black.⁴⁶

When the Wilmore family moved to West Chester in the summer of 1950 and sought to enroll their oldest son, Steve or "Stevie", at the local elementary school for the 1950-51 school year, they made a shocking discovery. As Gayraud recalled,

[West Chester] was the beginning of my radicalization in some ways, because, the thing that impressed me most about West Chester when I got there, was that my son would have to go to a segregated [Gay Street] school, when a perfectly good [High Street] grammar school was practically around the corner from the manse. But all black children in West Chester went to kindergarten and first grade at the Gay Street School. Pennsylvania!! In 1950. Amazing. Segregated school system there.⁴⁷

Chastened by the realization that the Jim Crow system against which he had fought in Oxford was already affecting his young children, Gayraud "immediately got involved in shaping my pastorate around doing something about that segregated school system in West Chester."⁴⁸ At a May 1950 school board meeting, even before his Lincoln graduation and appointment to a permanent pastorate, Wilmore, identified by historian of the local school system Florence Sechler Miller as a "recognized leader in the black community" and by West Chester's *Daily Local News* as the pastor of Second Presbyterian, provided a letter from and appeared as a representative of a small, "admittedly nameless" group of citizens concerned about school desegregation.⁴⁹ Representing the group along with Wilmore was William Fisher Brinton.⁵⁰

Brinton was a West Chester native, Haverford alumn, and Quaker pacifist who had performed Civilian Public Service due to his conscientious objector status during World War II.⁵¹ In his letter, Wilmore asked the board three questions:

Are parents free to enter their children in the elementary school nearest their residence? Are practice teaching assignments in the high school open to all qualified students without regard to race, color, or religion? Are applications for regular teaching assignments considered without regard for race, color, or religion?⁵²

School board president N. Harlan Slack “assured [Wilmore] that the answer to all three questions was ‘yes.’”⁵³ Wilmore was, reportedly, “very happy to hear that these questions are answered in the affirmative,” and said he would “take this information back to the group.”⁵⁴ Wilmore then sent a second letter to the school board in July.⁵⁵ In it, according to Florence Sechler Miller,

He expressed gratitude that no legal barriers existed to a fully integrated social system. “Whatever barriers do exist in a sense other than legal are artificial and surmountable,” he wrote. “It remains for concerned citizens and officials to overcome them.”⁵⁶

As Charles Porter had done three years earlier, Wilmore had forced the board to once again at least go on record in denying the existence of legal segregation, despite the fact that it remained the unwritten law. However, he also went further, raising his voice against employment discrimination in schools, saying,

... judging by the present picture in West Chester, there seems to be much less interest in the integration of teachers than is warrantable.... In view of the success which other school systems have had in the integration of Negro teachers, it is unfortunate that we have not yet been so moved by our democratic instincts.⁵⁷

He informed the board that his organization advocated the hire of more diverse faculties at the High Street and Auditorium schools, saying, “We would be pleased to offer assistance in discovering and securing applications from qualified persons.”⁵⁸ However, according to Miller, the board insisted that “it selected applicants for teaching positions based on their qualifications,”

and gave no sign of “any intentions to change existing practices or to try to find more black teachers.”⁵⁹

According to Wilmore, he and his son, “broke that school system’s pattern of segregation,” when Steve “was the first black student to be entered into the High Street School with a movement of parents, church people, and others standing behind him.”⁶⁰ Steve “caught hell from those white teachers and white students, small as they were, in that first year.”⁶¹ Despite Steve’s desegregation of the High Street School, the school system would continue to wrestle with school segregation through the mid-1960s, culminating in a mass demonstration on the courthouse steps in 1965 protesting the conditions faced by African American students.⁶² Bayard Rustin spoke at the demonstration, saying, “Negroes will no longer tolerate being ‘herded’ into the public high school’s general course, thus creating a second generation of uneducated Negroes with no hope for the future.”⁶³

Wilmore recalled little involvement from the members of his own African American congregation on High Street in this quietly successful desegregation campaign.⁶⁴ According to Mercedes Biddle Greer, in segregated West Chester, “most black residents kept their mouths shut, fearing the loss even of these menial jobs if they complained.”⁶⁵ While black residents felt empowered to speak their minds at the January 1950 forum at Second Presbyterian, they may have been happy to let others take the lead whenever possible. The outspoken “pillar of fire” Helena Robinson was the exception to the rule, and her fellow black teachers criticized her for it, saying, “if you don’t stop, you’re going to have us all out of a job.”⁶⁶

Instead, Wilmore largely credits white Quakers, including members of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the War Resisters League from throughout the

Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware area - people like the conscientious objector William Brinton, who had stood with Wilmore at the May 1950 school board meeting. These Quakers convinced African Americans in West Chester to send their students to the High Street School, led by little Stevie Wilmore.⁶⁷ According to Gayraud Wilmore, “they rallied around me because they had known me and my brother in the action against the places of public accommodation in Oxford and because they had been spurred on for years by the men of Lincoln University.”⁶⁸ It is unclear to what extent Jacques Wilmore was involved in this West Chester campaign, but he was at least present at the January 1950 meeting at Second Presbyterian. Furthermore, Gayraud’s highlighting of how well local Quakers knew the brothers makes more sense in Jacques’ case, given that he was the well-known face of the Oxford Campaign, and had more extensive Quaker connections than his brother, through his studies at Haverford College and his work for the AFSC.

Florence Sechler Miller has also identified Quakers as well as local Bahá’í, Unitarian, and Jewish communities as significant contributors to the early Civil Rights Movement in West Chester.⁶⁹ According to Mercedes Biddle Greer, “the civil rights struggle got started in groups like that, talking to one another, getting to know one another. Otherwise, the only way blacks knew whites was by working for the white families as their maids.”⁷⁰ Helena Robinson was a Bahá’í, as were activists Ethel and L. Sherwood Closson.⁷¹ Wilmore himself lamented that his “most important family” left Second Presbyterian during his tenure to join the local Bahá’í Spiritual Assembly, because of the Bahá’í practice of interracial worship, a “big blow” for Wilmore’s congregation, whose membership declined during his tenure.⁷²

Wilmore's Sunday preaching in West Chester also touched on elements of social activism. For example, the *Daily Local News* reported that, on July 15, 1951, he preached a sermon entitled "Sands of Sentiment" at a union service held at the local Methodist Church, in which he,

...expressed deep concern for the Christian church at large which he said "has sentiment but languishes in inactivity." He declared that our feelings are too often substituted for action, and that the church whose Christian witness and testimony are built on pious sentiments, good intentions, and good feelings, rather than on action, can never stand up under the pressure of this present day.⁷³

The *Daily Local News* also paraphrased him as saying, "the victorious church... is the church that has God's Word in its heart and then goes out and puts that Word into action."⁷⁴ On August 20, 1950 - in his second month as the permanent pastor and likely just weeks before little Stevie's matriculation at the High Street School - he preached from Luke 12:47, telling congregants to prepare for an apocalyptic end, the "return of the master of the house, the Lord Jesus Christ," and criticizing anyone who "knew his lord's will but neglected to do it."⁷⁵

Wilmore said, with an impatient, crusading zeal reflecting his embrace of ongoing social change, "We must stop deluding ourselves. Time is not running on *ad infinitum*. Time runs to an end. We are moving toward some great, wonderful event. Today's crises may hasten that event. Shall we face it as wise or unwise stewards?"⁷⁶ This news report did not mention any explicit connections Wilmore might have made in his preaching to school desegregation. However, it is easy to imagine Wilmore making the connection, at least in his own mind, between those "who knew [their] lord's will but neglected to do it," and other black West Chester residents, including many in his own congregation, who were reluctant to publicly associate themselves with racial justice efforts.

Conflicts with the Old Guard

Even before completing his Lincoln degree and moving to West Chester, Gayraud Wilmore had already stirred up plenty of trouble in his new city. Together with his brother - his fellow hotshot valedictorian - he had done the same in nearby Oxford through an NAACP chapter which had faced accusations of being a “Communist front organization.”⁷⁷ The brothers Wilmore had then sought to expand that organization into West Chester. Gayraud had turned up at at least one school board meeting - again, before even moving into town full-time - along with a draft-dodging Quaker troublemaker, to publicly question the unwritten rules of local school segregation. Gayraud was also already partnering with other misfits: Bahá’ís like the Clossons and the outspoken firecracker Helena Robinson, in addition to select black Protestants like the Durnells. These were not the kind of developments likely to please everyone in the community, and some of Wilmore’s key detractors were Presbyterian clergy, black and white.

McLain C. Spann was Wilmore’s immediate predecessor as pastor of Second Presbyterian. He had been pastor of that church for nearly twenty-six years, since 1923.⁷⁸ His wife was the church organist, and stayed on in that capacity during Wilmore’s pastorate.⁷⁹ The Rev. Spann, a native of Sumter, South Carolina who had served several churches in his home state prior to his West Chester pastorate, had given the invocation and led the Lord’s Prayer at Wilmore’s pastoral installation.⁸⁰ Spann was a graduate of Lincoln’s College and seminary, had served as a guest preacher at Lincoln on multiple occasions, was treasurer of Chester County’s Lincoln Alumni Association, and was well-connected in the world of black Presbyterianism.⁸¹ Spann was a Lincoln man, but he was a member of the old guard, and likely had little use for the agitation wrought by younger alumni like the Wilmore. He may have been

embarrassed by potential damage to the reputations of Lincoln and Second Presbyterian because of such activities, and perhaps even concerned that this new pastor might undo much of what Spann had worked so hard to create in his decades of ministry at Second Presbyterian. Wilmore has indeed said that the church's membership declined under his leadership, and even admitted that because of his involvement in social action and school desegregation, which seems to have involved little participation by his own church members, "I think I paid less attention to the church than I might have."⁸² While in West Chester, Gayraud and Lee were also busy raising young children, and Gayraud was completing his Master of Sacred Theology degree at Temple University, two other commitments which may have reduced his ability to pursue his pastoral duties.⁸³ Wilmore has described Spann as "very conservative," and said that, as his successor, he "tried to bring something different to the church."⁸⁴ The two men were open about their disagreements with one another, but remained friends nevertheless. The Spanns sat on the front pew of the church every Sunday, which Wilmore appreciated as a gesture of support, though it may also have been a way for the pastor emeritus to carefully monitor and even put pressure on his young successor to attend more to church growth and less to social action.⁸⁵

Gayraud Wilmore seems to have faced less friendly pressure from a close ally of Spann's, the white pastor Robert Benjamin "Bob" Boell (pronounced "Bell"). According to Wilmore, the pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, the wealthier of the two white Presbyterian congregations within a few blocks of each other and Wilmore's church, having observed Wilmore's leadership in social action and school desegregation, "was very unhappy about it, and said that I was a communist, and spread the word throughout West Chester, throughout the

Presbytery... that I was a troublemaker and a communist.”⁸⁶ He added that this pastor “did not like me,” “started rumors about the inadequacy of my education at Lincoln’s seminary,” and

... told the Presbytery when I was absent from the meeting and unable to defend myself, that I ran around with Quaker misfits and was creating a crisis in West Chester by stirring up passions about the Gay Street School being segregated, telling folks to send their children to the High Street School.⁸⁷

Wilmore recalled that this white minister pressed the presbytery “to discontinue the small stipend given to Second Church” to supplement Wilmore’s salary.⁸⁸ Wilmore added, of this pastor,

He felt that I was a communist because I had dared to take up cudgels against this deeply rooted segregated school system, and was radical enough to condemn the city and city fathers and the churches for permitting it to exist. So it was during the time when it was easy to tag people with the label communist if they did anything unorthodox....⁸⁹

Robert B. Boell pastored Westminster Presbyterian in West Chester from 1944 to 1965, and Wilmore has identified him as the pastor in question.⁹⁰ According to Westminster Church’s official history, “his tenure was marked by prosperity and progress in virtually every area of the church’s life and activity.”⁹¹ Westminster Church did regularly make token donations of ten dollars per month to Second Presbyterian, donations which seem to have begun on the day after Wilmore was officially installed as pastor, and ended when Wilmore’s departure for another position left the pulpit vacant; therefore the donations seem to have been intended to support the pastor’s salary.⁹² At one point, church members gave their approval to the extension of such contributions, “if Rev. Boell ascertains that there is a need for continued assistance.”⁹³ Wilmore did write to Westminster to thank the church for its contributions and ask that they continue.⁹⁴

Boell was the moderator of the Presbytery of Chester during the 1949 year in which Wilmore was appointed temporary pastor and, more importantly, served as chair of the presbytery’s Committee on “Pastoral” or “Ministerial” Relations throughout Wilmore’s tenure at

Second Presbyterian.⁹⁵ As chair of that committee, he was the regional official most responsible for oversight of Wilmore. Boell participated in this capacity in Wilmore's 1949 appointment as a temporary pastor, and in Wilmore's June 1950 installation service.⁹⁶ At a January 24, 1950 meeting, Boell, as chair of Pastoral Relations, asked that the presbytery approve a contribution of fifty dollars per month to Wilmore's salary, drawn from a fund provided by the denomination's Board of National Missions (BNM).⁹⁷ The presbytery complied. At the June 27, 1950 meeting at which Wilmore officially joined the presbytery, a recommendation was made and then approved that the presbytery grant \$1,000 toward Wilmore's \$2,400 annual salary, in addition to a pension and housing in the manse.⁹⁸ Boell also informed those in attendance that his church as well as First Presbyterian were providing further contributions to Second Presbyterian - ten dollars each per month.⁹⁹ Considering all of these funding sources, Wilmore was earning a total of approximately \$2,640 per year.¹⁰⁰ In comparison, Boell's salary by the time of Wilmore's 1952 departure from that pulpit was \$5,000 per year.¹⁰¹

In a 1981 interview, Wilmore provided some additional context which could make sense of Boell's supposed identification of Wilmore as a "communist," noting that these events took place "during the time when it was easy to tag people with the label, 'communist,' if they did anything unorthodox."¹⁰² He highlighted, as previously discussed, his involvement at Lincoln in the Young Communist League alongside Milton Henry, and pointed out of Boell, "he may have checked some of that out, to tell you the truth."¹⁰³ Wilmore's 1949-52 tenure at Second Presbyterian did, after all, coincide with the era of McCarthyism.

1949 included Mao Zedong's assumption of the leadership of China and the Soviet Union's first successful test of a nuclear bomb. In 1950 the Korean Conflict began, Alger Hiss

was convicted, and the Rosenbergs were arrested. U.S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy first asserted that he had a list of over two hundred communists working in the State Department in February 1950, right in the middle of Operation Oxford, just weeks after the pro-NAACP forum at Second Presbyterian, and a few months before Wilmore's pastoral installation and appearance at a school board meeting. The term, "McCarthyism," was coined in March 1950. W. E. B. DuBois was investigated and indicted in 1948-51, Paul Robeson was blacklisted in 1949-50, and 1953 saw the questioning of Lincoln graduate Langston Hughes by a U.S. Senate committee. In late 1951 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed the "Pennsylvania Loyalty Act," requiring that state employees - including teachers - had to take a loyalty oath and pledge non-membership "in any organization that advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States - by force or violence or any other unconstitutional means."¹⁰⁴

Wilmore's own recall of Boell's allegedly defamatory rhetoric appears to be the only remaining historical source for such an event.¹⁰⁵ However, there are several people who remember Robert B. Boell, and have been able to provide some context for his character and his attitudes with reference to racial justice, including their assessments of whether he was likely to have spoken against Wilmore in such a fashion. These individuals disagree in their assessments. They include Robert Doran Young, Sue Tiernan, Anderson Porter, and Robert Passmore Boell, the son of Robert Benjamin Boell.

Robert Doran "Bob" Young succeeded the elder Boell as Westminster's pastor in 1966, and is close friends with the younger Boell.¹⁰⁶ When provided with Wilmore's account of the incident, he said,

Your mention of Bob Boell, pastor of Westminster, who spoke against Gayraud... surprised me. He was not a social activist. I can't picture him doing that.... I picture him as a quiet man, a good methodical Presbyterian, not socially involved.¹⁰⁷

Robert Passmore "Bob" Boell, also a Presbyterian minister, similarly recalled his father to have been a quiet, apolitical pastor, neither an open supporter nor an opponent of racial justice in the 1950s-60s. While unaware of the particular incident in question, the younger Boell did not think that Wilmore's description of his father sounded accurate. However, he did suggest that his father had a close relationship with Wilmore's longstanding and conservative predecessor, McLain C. Spann, with whom he had shared a desire for stability and moderation. The younger Boell thought that Spann's replacement by a young, idealistic, activist like Wilmore would have caused his father some dismay.¹⁰⁸

Sue Tiernan attended the High Street School in the early 1950s and is the current Vice-President of the local school board.¹⁰⁹ Her father, Elwood P. Spellman, a dentist who served at one point as the school dentist for the Gay Street School, was a local school board member throughout the 1950s and served as its chair and as a proponent of school desegregation from 1958 to 1968.¹¹⁰ Tiernan knew the elder Boell, but not Wilmore, and wrote, "I have no doubt that the minister of 2nd Presbyterian was told by a mainstream minister to [stay] in his place. There was a lot of talk back then about the 'good Negroes' and the 'Troublemakers' who spoke out for civil rights."¹¹¹ Tiernan added that the elder Boell was "a sweet man, but would have taken umbrage if anybody said anything about the Civil Rights Movement on the Presbytery floor."¹¹²

Anderson Porter, a Lincoln alumn, served as pastor of Second Presbyterian during the 1960s, and was well acquainted with Wilmore and both of the Revs. Boell. He was a Civil Rights leader at the time, having organized buses to transport local citizens to the March on Washington

in 1963, and, with Dr. W. T. M. Johnson, having organized the 1965 courthouse demonstration over conditions for black students in West Chester, at which Bayard Rustin spoke.¹¹³ When provided with Wilmore's account of the supposed conflict between himself and Boell, Porter noted that he was not aware of any such incident, which, if it occurred, would have predated his own West Chester ministry. However, he was confident in asserting that Wilmore's account of the situation did fit his own perceptions of the characters of both of his fellow ministers.

I can confirm that one hundred percent everything that [Wilmore] has said, and, Rev. Robert Boell, he, was prejudiced.... But his son and I became friends, and his son wasn't prejudiced, as far as I could see. But Bob Boell was. But, we were able to talk him into signing a statement for equal rights for all people, and have a full page [ad] on that, and that was done in 1963 or 64.¹¹⁴

Porter added that he thought the issue was probably more about "respect" than about salary, and he gave more details about his relationship with the elder Boell.

... my acquaintance with Bob Boell, when he was here in the early '60s: Let me say this, without fear of contradiction. When you are born black, and you grew up black, one of the first things that you learn, for survival, is to detect racial profiling and racial prejudice in people. And, I would tell you on my deathbed that Bob Boell was very prejudiced.... I was never invited to his church for exchange of pulpits, which we started, you know, that give you an idea of how bad it was, and if anything happened for me to get connected to the church, it was through persuasion and coercion. He was just not a person who supported Civil Rights.¹¹⁵

Despite reports of the elder Boell's opposition to racial justice activism, as well as of his preference to avoid involvement in controversy or politics, Boell did preach about social justice. On August 20, 1950, the same day when Wilmore preached that Christians should do the Lord's will amid crises leading up to a time of reckoning, Boell preached at a service held jointly by Westminster and First Presbyterian. Boell asked his congregation to pray for a world free of war, and called "for the building among ourselves of the Kingdom of God," which he described as,

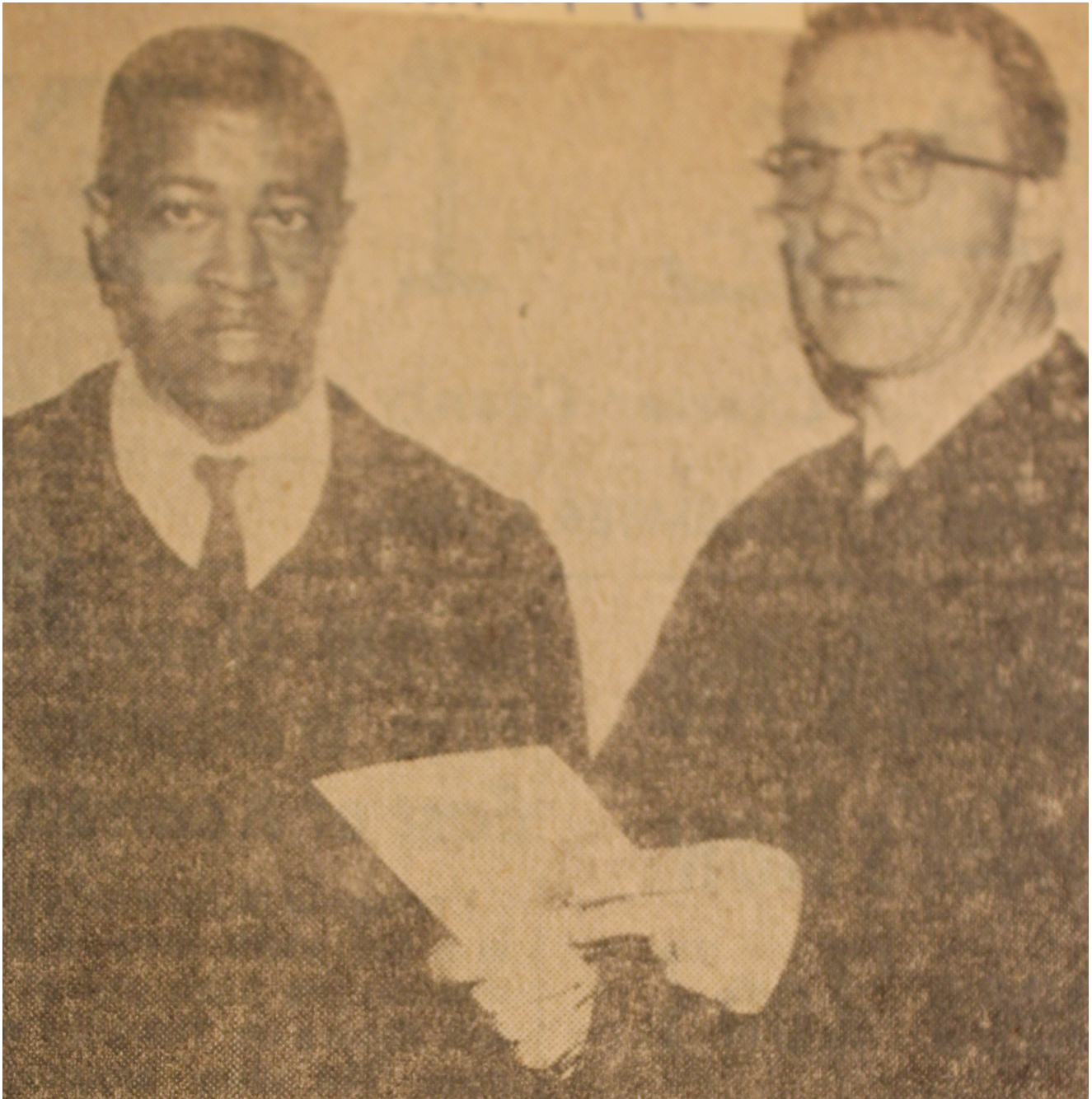


Figure 8. Anderson E. Porter and Robert B. Boell at Porter's ordination service, where Boell presided, Samuel G. Stevens preached, and Andrew E. Murray gave the charge to the congregation. Second Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania, December 2, 1960.

Detail from photograph in untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 2, 1960, "West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers" folder, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

...a society where the way and will of God are recognized as supreme. And when we pray for the coming of the Kingdom, we are praying for a social order in which Jesus would feel at home.... to pray for the coming of the Kingdom is to pray for the coming of a reign of righteousness, justice, fair play and a chance for every human soul. It is to pray for rightness within the individual heart, rightness between capital and labor, rightness and justice between nation and nation. Not only are we to pray for the coming of the Kingdom but also Christ wants us to get off our knees and on to our feet and put our hands to the task and really work for the establishment of God's Kingdom with zeal and devotion.¹¹⁶

However, while preaching about social justice and the Kingdom of God, for Boell, necessitated mentions of war and peace as well as labor relations, the same was not true of racial justice, a cause which seems to have been absent from this particular sermon.

As previously mentioned, Gayraud Wilmore, Robert B. Boell, and McLain C. Spann were in the same presbytery as many of Wilmore's former Lincoln professors, including Andrew E. Murray and Jesse Belmont Barber, as well as President Horace Mann Bond and Samuel Govan Stevens.¹¹⁷ John H. Ware III, a wealthy and influential white moderate from Oxford with close connections to Lincoln, was also an elder in this presbytery, as was Elwood P. Spellman of Westminster Church in West Chester.¹¹⁸ Robert B. Boell served on the presbytery's General Council with Andrew E. Murray, and on its Christian Education Committee with Jesse Belmont Barber.¹¹⁹ Murray was the youth adviser and head of the Committee on Theological Education.¹²⁰ Several of these men participated in the ordinations, by this presbytery, of Maurice J. Moyer, and of Claude C. Kilgore, who would later become head of the 1960s-70s organization Black Presbyterians United and an important ally of Wilmore in the Black Power era.¹²¹ In 1951 Wilmore himself was elected Vice-Moderator of the presbytery, and as a member of the Christian Education Committee, an indication that any concerns about Wilmore's social action activities or neglect of other pastoral duties could not have been widely held.¹²²

The available evidence does not prove exactly what form of conflict, if any, took place between Gayraud Wilmore and Robert B. Boell. However, it is reasonable to speculate that, perhaps, in the spring or summer of 1950 - the height of McCarthyism, including in Pennsylvania's public schools via the "Pennsylvania Loyalty Act" - Boell heard rumors that the incoming pastor of Second Presbyterian had associations with Milton Henry and the Young Communist League. He surely was also aware of the Wilmore brothers' involvement in Operation Oxford, and might have heard that Gayraud was more interested in radical desegregation politics than in the kind of ministry Boell thought his church or presbytery should support. Such rumors could have come from McLain C. Spann, given his conservatism and disagreements with Wilmore, his close relationship with Boell, and his role as a connection point between Lincoln and West Chester. Such rumors could also have come from the white Oxford pastors or elders with whom Boell would have interacted at presbytery meetings.

With such a strong black and Lincolnian presence in this presbytery, it is difficult to imagine a longstanding leader like Robert B. Boell thinking he could get away with openly labeling one of Lincoln's favorite sons - a double valedictorian - as a communist. However, it is reasonable to think that Boell could have raised such concerns privately among some of his presbytery colleagues, perhaps even among Wilmore's allies like Murray or Barber. Such colleagues would have vigorously defended Wilmore to Boell, and then would have passed on the news of such an encounter to Wilmore. Boell's comments might have taken the form of a serious objection or a minor aside. In fact, Boell may have even committed a microaggression, perhaps joking privately that the presbytery should cut off the "communist's" salary, without realizing that others would take him seriously. However, because of Boell's prominent position

both as chair of Pastoral Relations and as pastor of a wealthy West Chester church which was making monthly donations to Wilmore's salary, and because of the McCarthyist national context, news of any such conversation would have been a matter which Wilmore and his allies could not have ignored, regardless of any possible misunderstanding of Boell's original intent. In the Presbyterian system of church governance, committees have most of the power, therefore no one individual can make major decisions on their own. However, chairs of committees and pastors of churches can often easily sway others toward their point of view. Furthermore, in Wilmore's case, there was no individual, in that presbytery or otherwise, who had a greater say over whether to fire him or cut his salary than did Robert B. Boell.

Regardless of the elusive facts of the Boell-Wilmore conflict, it undoubtedly had a major influence on Wilmore's development. Wilmore later recalled that as a result of this particular incident, he "was leery of white clergy who presumed to know more about black people than we knew about ourselves."¹²³ Indeed this first full-time pastoral experience taught Wilmore to be "leery" of many, but not all, white clergy, and to cultivate vibrant relationships with and networks among black clergy, networks upon which he would rely for the rest of his career. One of the most important such networks for him was the Council of the North and West.

Black Clergy Allies: The Council of the North and West

As noted in Chapter 1, the Council of the North and West was the primary national organization of black Presbyterians. For much of the twentieth century, two Presbyterian denominations were the largest in the United States: the "Presbyterian Church (USA)" (later the "United Presbyterian Church in the USA") and the "Presbyterian Church (US)." The latter

largely consisted of white Presbyterian churches in the states which had once constituted the Confederate States of America. The former consisted of most of the Presbyterian churches everywhere else in the United States (the “North and West”), as well as most of the black Presbyterian churches in the South. Therefore, in the South, black and white Presbyterians were in separate denominations, which also meant that regional meetings of presbyteries and synods were either all-white or all-black. Among other things, this meant that black Presbyterians in the South had abundant opportunities for solidarity and community with other black Presbyterians. However, black Presbyterians in the North, unlike their AME, AME Zion, and National Baptist brethren, did not have the same opportunities - when they attended regional church meetings, they were in the minority and subject to majority-white leadership.¹²⁴ As a result, non-southern black Presbyterians formed their own caucuses for mutual support, solidarity, and community.

Such Presbyterians had caucused together informally “even prior to the Civil War,” meeting along with black Congregationalist clergy as as early as 1856, but in 1894 pastors Francis Grimké, R. H. Armstrong, Matthew Anderson, and John B. Reeve met at the First African Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia to formalize the creation of the “Colored Presbyterian Council of Ministers and Elders in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia.”¹²⁵ This organization was later known as the Afro-American Presbyterian Council, and in 1947 it changed its name to the Council of the North and West, “the dropping out of any racial designation suggesting the aspirations of African Americans in the North and West for total integration into the structures and programs of the denomination.”¹²⁶ The organization “filled the need for fellowship among Negro Presbyterians, and, in later years, functioned as a pressure group in communicating the attitudes of Negro

Presbyterians to the agencies of the denomination.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, “since Negroes were rarely, if ever, elected to serve on the boards of the church, the council became an important informal contact between Negroes and the officials of the church.”¹²⁸ The organization grew from forty-six members at its 1894 founding to eighty ministers in 1956.¹²⁹ Having already changed its name in 1947, the Council began in 1953 to formally consider whether its further existence was justified.¹³⁰ In what Wilmore has described as “a burst of false optimism about the brotherhood and sisterhood they might expect in the immediate future” - based in part on the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court - the Council voted in 1957 to disband, “declaring that its usefulness had obviously come to an end in this long-awaited era of racial integration.”¹³¹ According to Wilmore, “it was an unfortunate miscalculation.”¹³² Led by Bryant George and Edler G. Hawkins, the group re-organized in 1963 as “Concerned Presbyterians,” a name which, like “Council of the North and West,” again avoided any mention of blackness.¹³³ Under Hawkins, Thelma Adair, and E. Wellington “Tony” Butts, the organization re-embraced black particularity in its 1968 name-change to “Black Presbyterians United” (BPU).¹³⁴ In 1988, in response to the UPCUSA’s 1983 merger with the southern PC (US) denomination, which had its own “Black Presbyterian Leadership Caucus,” BPU merged with that caucus to become the “National Black Presbyterian Caucus” (NBPC), which still functions today under that name.¹³⁵

McDowell Church, as previously noted, had been involved in the Council as early as 1941, and had sent delegates to every annual meeting since 1945. Many Lincoln alumni and professors were involved with the Council, so Wilmore had probably been aware of its existence and activities throughout the 1940s, through both McDowell and Lincoln. Wilmore himself was a member of the Council by October 1951.¹³⁶ At that time, his fellow members included Milton

Galamison, Shelby Rooks, Jesse Belmont Barber, Frank T. Wilson, Sr., and Samuel G. Stevens of the Lincoln community; McDowell's former pastor Arthur E. Rankin (also of Lincoln), McDowell's new pastor Walter E. Bowen, two laypeople from McDowell Church; McLain C. Spann of West Chester and Lincoln, Benjamin F. Glasco of Philadelphia and West Chester, and several people who would come to be important associates in future years: LeRoy Patrick, Clarence Cave, Robert Pierre Johnson, James H. Robinson (also of Lincoln), and Thelma and Edler Hawkins.¹³⁷ Wilmore is not listed as having been a speaker or officer in the Council, and may not have actually attended its events until the 1954 and 1955 annual meetings.¹³⁸ Other meetings in the late 1940s and early 1950s included participation by Clifford Earle, Margaret "Maggie" Kuhn, Eugene Carson Blake, and Marshal L. Scott, white Presbyterian officials with whom Wilmore would later work closely.¹³⁹

Wilmore's pastorate at Second Presbyterian had been a challenging one, but it had also given him valuable experience in activism. It taught him further lessons about dealing with paternalistic white clergy, about the challenges of attempting to mobilize and radicalize African Americans who might be reluctant to risk their jobs and more for the sake of the latest racial justice issue, and about potential opportunities for collaboration with Quakers, Jews, Bahá'ís, and other allies. It also provided him, through the Council of the North and West, with connections throughout the world of black Presbyterianism, supplementing connections already established at McDowell Church and Lincoln University, relationships which would prove invaluable at many other critical moments in his career. Wilmore may also have learned an important lesson in terms of call/vocation - that congregational ministry was not for him! He would never again serve a congregation as his primary ministry, and would spend the remainder

of his career in serving in activism through various church boards and organizations, and in teaching and scholarship.

Trial Balloons in a “Turbulent Atmosphere of World-Changing Ideas and Energies”

A New Job and a New Home: The Student Christian Movement and Tanguy Homesteads

Wilmore’s own admittedly limited attentiveness to the traditional demands of his pastoral position, perhaps a sense that he might be better suited to a different kind of ministry, as well as the backlash he faced in activism all may have played roles in leading him to a career change.

However, the primary cause of this change was financial. Wilmore recalled,

...I was making a salary of \$1,200 a year, by that time I had two children, I was living in the manse, but making such a small salary that I was not able to adequately take care of my family.... My third year I sold my car at an auction in Lancaster, in order to buy groceries for that week, and hitchhiked back from Lancaster Pennsylvania to West Chester, with my auction money, and bought groceries, and on that day, I decided the Lord wanted me to work somewhere else.¹⁴⁰

Wilmore, a combat veteran, double valedictorian, and minister, was nevertheless well acquainted with poverty from his childhood. He had worked hard to solidify his position in the middle class, and to provide for his wife and two, soon to be three children (with the birth of Roberta in 1953). He also remembered the experiences of his mother, Patricia, in the exploitative, demeaning circumstances of domestic work in white people’s homes, and was determined to prevent Lee from ever having to do that kind of work. Wilmore’s financial pressure was informed, therefore, by his family’s experiences of economic, racial, and gender oppression.

This pressure also was not unrelated to his ongoing racial justice activism. While donations to his salary by Westminster and First Presbyterian were much smaller than those

contributed by the Presbytery of Chester (perhaps drawn from the BNM) and by the members of his own Second Presbyterian, even ten dollars per month likely had a concrete impact on the day-to-day life of the Wilmore family. All of these donations, but particularly those from the two local white churches, came with strings attached and could be revoked at any time, giving local white people a measure of control over black churches. White people already controlled the employment circumstances of most local African Americans, as seen in black teachers' discomfort with Helena Robinson's activism. Black pastors have traditionally had more latitude than other African Americans to speak and act against white interests because their salaries have come primarily from black people, but these circumstances were more complicated in Wilmore's case.

These donations likely constrained Wilmore's activism - if not in the exact way in which Wilmore remembers the Boell incident, then surely in other explicit and implicit ways. In the end, these donations were insufficient to keep the Wilmore family afloat - and Gayraud Wilmore may have also realized that if he pursued a continued and even more outspoken activist ministry from that pulpit, such donations would disappear and make his financial circumstances even more untenable. He therefore, "decided that the Lord wanted me to work somewhere else," and soon received confirmation of that divine will, communicated through the Lord's liaison to both the Lincoln alumni network and the Council of the North and West, his old professor and Dean, dating back to their mutual involvement in the 1942 re-organization of Lincoln's NAACP, Frank T. Wilson, Sr.:

And he [the Lord] did, because Frank Wilson called me up on that very day when I returned from Lancaster and said, "Gay, I don't think that you have a chance, but I know about a position that's open in the Middle Atlantic Student Christian Movement, as

Regional Secretary. And I am a member of the personnel committee. If you would like me to put your name in I can, but I doubt very much whether you have a chance because I think they've already settled on somebody. But if you want to you can come down to Howard and be interviewed by the student personnel committee...." I went down there and I got the job.¹⁴¹

Thanks to his old mentor and fellow Council member, in 1952 Wilmore left his pastorate for an appointment as Presbyterian Regional Secretary of the Student Christian Movement for the Middle Atlantic Region, headquartered at the University of Pennsylvania, working with the Rev. Bob James, who represented the student YMCA on the SCM staff.¹⁴²

In Wilmore's final sermon as pastor of Second Presbyterian, on January 27, 1952, he preached on Psalm 31:24, "Be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord," with a sermon title of "Hope in the Lord."¹⁴³ In this sermon, he "approached the subject of Christian hope with a discussion of the importance of courage in the face of the modern problems of living." He said that "God strengthens the heart of those who take the initiative with good courage." He characterized Christian hope as "confident expectation," faith in God's plan and "that which God has prepared for them that love and serve Him."¹⁴⁴ This was not a surprising message for any farewell sermon; nevertheless, its call for courage, service, and faith in God's ongoing work fit with his prior preaching, especially his frequent calls for social action by Christians, even as he practiced such action through desegregation activism. Later that evening the church and its young adult ministry observed "Young People's Day," at which Wilmore spoke and gave the benediction.¹⁴⁵ It was fitting that his last Sunday involved not only a call to courage and action, but also a special event and message for young people. Wilmore's ongoing interests in ministry to young adults, beginning with the January 1950 Youth Forum on

the city's need for an NAACP chapter, had led him to commit to that work full-time in his new ministry with the SCM.

At the January 22 meeting at which the presbytery dissolved the pastoral relation between Wilmore and his church, Wilmore "described his call to interracial student work on college campuses in the five state area...."¹⁴⁶ Curiously, at this meeting, three ministers - Robert B. Boell McLain C. Spann, and J. Garrett Kell (pastor of First Presbyterian) - "spoke highly of his work in the church and community."¹⁴⁷ Given Boell's position as chair of Pastoral/Ministerial Relations and Spann's as pastor emeritus, both were expected to speak well of Wilmore on this occasion, regardless of their private feelings about his leadership. Nevertheless, these kind words suggest that tensions had lessened between Wilmore and these ministers - though they also might have been quite relieved at his departure, a relief which freed them up to speak more warmly of this upstart young pastor than they otherwise would have. In addition to Boell and Spann, Samuel G. Stevens and Andrew E. Murray were among the ministers in attendance at this presbytery meeting, where they also made final arrangements for the upcoming ordination of Maurice Moyer.¹⁴⁸

Wilmore's joining of the SCM began a nearly twenty-year period of service on the staff of regional and national religious bodies in support of social change. For Wilmore, this was a time of "radical interracial fellowship," and involved associations with Quakers like Charles Coates Walker and Bayard Rustin.¹⁴⁹ Having been closely associated with Quaker activists in the West Chester desegregation campaign, the Wilmore family became the first African Americans to join the Tanguy Homesteads, a racially progressive, Quaker-influenced intentional community in Glen Mills, Pennsylvania, nine miles outside of West Chester, where Walker and James also

lived - in fact, the Wilmore and James families lived next door to one another.¹⁵⁰ Gayraud described Tanguy as a “Way-making community of homesteaders and unattached believers in racial integration.”¹⁵¹ Lee and Gayraud’s third child and only daughter, Roberta, was born in 1953. She “has had a lifelong love affair with horses” which began in the Tanguy community, and led eventually to her establishment of a horse farm in Massachusetts, named “Lee Ella Farm” after her mother, with horses named after prominent figures in black history. Roberta also founded the Children’s Equitation Center, a nonprofit “with the mission to encourage children of color and other underserved youngsters to participate in the horse world.”¹⁵² In addition to having rarely encountered African Americans in the world of horses, she said, “I had a wonderful experience with horses as a child with no money, and I wanted other children to have that same experience.”¹⁵³

In the SCM, Gayraud Wilmore engaged in campus ministry while traveling to colleges in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C., mostly visiting small schools lacking an on-site campus minister.¹⁵⁴ The Mid-Atlantic SCM was a joint effort of the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the YMCA and YWCA.¹⁵⁵ His appointment was noted as unusual, for his denomination’s Board of Christian Education (BCE) had previously “confined its [campus ministry] work to some 114 student centers on college and university campuses,” yet his assignment was to “travel among the colleges of the region, serving Presbyterian students wherever they are to be found.”¹⁵⁶

While this may have been an unusual appointment for the the BCE in particular, it did fit into broader patterns of mainline Protestant campus ministry in the mid-twentieth century. From the early twentieth century, when more students began attend state and other secular colleges and

universities instead of denominational colleges, mainline Protestant denominations had gradually begun sending campus ministers into these other institutions.¹⁵⁷ While fewer of these students were attending religious institutions, most students remained religious themselves, giving even ostensibly non-religious schools a rather pious feel.¹⁵⁸ Most higher education institutions still required chapel attendance until the 1940s, chapel was usually available even if not compulsory, and “YMCA and YWCA work had thrived [at such institutions] for years.”¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, more people were going to college in general, another factor which highlighted non-sectarian college campuses as “rich,” “fruitful fields of ministry.”¹⁶⁰ Mainline denominations’ new strategy was to create “university pastorates,” a model for the professionalization of campus ministry which was “expressed in the title of a 1938 book by Clarence P. Shedd, a professor at Yale Divinity School: *The Church Follows Its Students*.”¹⁶¹ While such programs began in the first decade of the twentieth century (led especially by Presbyterians), they “continued to grow through the 1950s.”¹⁶² Wilmore had been sent as an itinerant “university pastor” in keeping with this “church follows its students” strategy.

Wilmore “found the SCM... an exciting enterprise.”¹⁶³ There he and his colleagues “counseled and gave organizing leadership through campus visitations and summer conferencing” to several hundred collegiate men and women, both white and black, who Wilmore said “became the base of the student activism that marked” CORE and SNCC later on, encouraging these students as budding racial justice activists.¹⁶⁴ Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, a Presbyterian minister and professor emerita at Columbia Theological Seminary, was one of the students involved with Wilmore’s SCM, while a student at Beaver College near Philadelphia.¹⁶⁵

Her recollection of his ministry reveals how the SCM was a much better “fit” for Wilmore’s talents than was the pulpit of Second Presbyterian.

Gayraud S. Wilmore was the Presbyterian staff person for the Student Christian Movement near Philadelphia in the early 1950s. He brought to that role an uncommon ability to think theologically and to also help students to do so. His central concern seemed to be who we Christians were as the church in the world and how we understood ourselves and our world from that perspective. He believed it was important to know our own tradition and to be able to present its strengths to the rest of the church family. Beyond that, an ecumenical perspective joined us all together in a common task. Gay Wilmore presumed that all of us were capable of theological thinking as the source of our actions - even a young woman majoring in home economics. For many of us, black and white, men and women, he gave us the model and the support to begin our self-understanding as Christians and together to know ourselves part of the one, holy catholic church.¹⁶⁶

A year into his SCM work, Wilmore visited his alma mater as a guest chapel speaker, on “The Principles of Christianity on The Campus.”¹⁶⁷ In his address, Wilmore noted that some had pronounced science ascendant over Christianity after World War II, and that some universities had marginalized religion classes accordingly, but Wilmore said that contemporary students were “less embarrassed about Christianity,” and “are questioning the so-called objectivity and detachment of the University” and its “overvaluation of social prestige.” He further claimed that “students want to know the relevance of the Christian faith to the various academic subjects.” As an example, he related a story about a “foreign student passing through the customs office,” who, when asked “if he had any documents advertising the overthrow of the Government,” responded affirmatively, because he was carrying a New Testament!¹⁶⁸ This appearance at Lincoln underscored Wilmore’s interest in religion for its own sake, not merely for the sake of social action, perhaps in part reflecting a Niebuhrian neo-orthodoxy which was popular at the time. Yet this anecdote also revealed Wilmore’s ongoing interest in connecting faith to the world, as well

as a flash of religio-political radicalism in suggesting that the Bible required the overthrow of government. While such a line might draw a chuckle in a present-day sermon, it would have had a more serious relevance in the era of McCarthyism, especially given Wilmore's prior involvement in the Young Communist League and his brush with accusations of communism in West Chester.¹⁶⁹

Wilmore has also said that his SCM involvement "had a lot to do with shaping my theological acumen" and "giving some substance to my ministry," citing the important theological documents and international conferences generated by the World Student Christian Federation, of which his Mid-Atlantic SCM was an affiliate. The SCM also brought him into contact with international figures like Hans-Ruedi Weber, D. T. Niles, and M. M. Thomas. Wilmore also cited the work with the students themselves as intellectually stimulating, saying, "I was at some of the finest colleges in the Middle Atlantic Region, and had an opportunity... to be challenged by bright young people, and forced therefore to go back to my books and to continue my education, in a way that has made a marvelous contribution to my development."¹⁷⁰

A January 1955 article in *Presbyterian Life* on Wilmore's SCM ministry called Wilmore, "known simply as 'Gay,'" "a well-known visitor at college campuses in the East."¹⁷¹ It noted that he visited mostly small colleges, many of which were too small to merit a full-time Presbyterian campus minister. Wilmore worked to develop SCM chapters on those campuses, as a "unified Protestant ministry" of two denominations and the YMCA and YWCA. "He is instrumental in arranging meetings, seminars, and week-end conferences to discuss the relationship of Christianity to topics of interest to undergraduates," having held "thirty inter-collegiate gatherings" in the 1954 year. "The thirty-two-year-old itinerant minister is always willing to

assist in solving student problems, individually or collectively. Frequently this means talking over with a boy or girl an apparent conflict between new classroom ideas and religious beliefs,” as was evident in Wilmore’s visit to Lincoln in 1953.¹⁷²

The article also said of establishments in college towns along the Mason-Dixon line which refused service to African American students, “in these situations, Gay prefers not to take an active role but assists students in persuading businessmen to give everyone equal consideration.”¹⁷³ Wilmore had of course taken quite an active role in desegregation activism in 1950, and engaged in and preached frequently on “action” at Second Presbyterian.¹⁷⁴ This ostensible preference to avoid “an active role” may have been a way to represent himself in this article as less “activist” than he really was, or it may have reflected a shift in his activism strategy, either permanently or in his SCM job in particular. Former Second Presbyterian pastor Anderson Porter did describe Wilmore as a quiet, behind-the-scenes activist, and perhaps Wilmore’s support of his brother’s Lincoln/Oxford activism fit that same mold.¹⁷⁵

The Brown v. Board Supreme Court decision of May 1954 - less than a year after Roberta’s birth, two years into Gayraud’s SCM position, and four years after little Stevie’s triumphal entry into the High Street School - had a major influence on Gayraud during this time.

I remember, the 1954 Supreme Court decision came out, on May 17, 1954, when I was commuting from Tanguy... to Philadelphia, every morning. I remember coming back on the train, the commuter train that I took with Bob James.... I remember reading the headlines on the evening paper... and watching the faces of my fellow passengers, who were shocked to realize that a whole new era in race relations was being ushered in by this historic decision. And chuckling inside of myself, with glee, to be a part of witnessing such discomfort on the part of people I presumed to be racist, you know, in that coach, on our way back to West Chester from Philadelphia.... And I knew then that my ministry would be greatly affected by what was to happen in the era, in the field of desegregation.¹⁷⁶



Figure 9. Gayraud Wilmore, interviewed by *Presbyterian Life* on his work with the SCM, 1955.

“College Circuit-Rider: Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. - Student Christian Movement Representative,”
Presbyterian Life, January 8, 1955, “West Goshen Township Churches: Baptist Church,
Ministers” folder, Chester County Historical Society, West Chester, PA.

Wilmore may have been a quiet, behind-the-scenes figure at times, but was always fiery, even if he kept that fire to himself - as, in this instance, when he took pleasure, at least in that moment, not so much at the advances Brown v. Board had made for black children, but at the discomfort of his fellow train riders. Perhaps he was also thinking of the discomfort this decision would have created for the other white racists with whom he had contended in the past: ministers in West Chester, business owners in Oxford, Army officers in Italy, and insurance agents, neighborhood immigrant kids, and members of the Poor Richard Club in Philadelphia. While Wilmore himself typically interacted in a courteous, respectful manner with white people, he had a keen appreciation for figures like his brother Jacques, James “Deac” Johnson, Milton Henry, and, later, James Forman and Angela Davis, “pillars of fire” who were willing to leave such pretenses aside and speak bluntly and directly against white supremacy, to the chagrin of white people.¹⁷⁷

In the *Presbyterian Life* interview, Wilmore reportedly described his SCM work as “successful,” though he noted that such success was “hard to measure.”¹⁷⁸ According to the interviewer, “one of the most rewarding moments he has had took place recently when, at a week-end conference, a girl who had been an outspoken agnostic prayed: ‘O God, it is so easy to serve thee with our lips and so difficult to serve thee with our lives.’”¹⁷⁹ The interviewer did not say why Wilmore found this incident rewarding, although the interviewer, by referring to the girl as “an outspoken agnostic,” implied that her apparent newfound faith in God was the “success.” However, Wilmore’s ongoing interest in turning Christians toward “action” might suggest that he was just as pleased with her realization that faith required such action. The article said that Wilmore “became interested in working with students during his pastorate at Second

Presbyterian,” perhaps reflecting his work with the Youth Forums (and racial/social justice) there.¹⁸⁰

Christian Action

The interviewer also identified Wilmore as “vice-chairman of the Philadelphia Chapter of Christian Action.”¹⁸¹ Reinhold Niebuhr and others had founded the Fellowship of Socialist Christians in 1930, later named the “Frontier Fellowship,” re-organized in September 1951 as “Christian Action,” which published the journal *Radical Religion*, later renamed *Christianity and Society*.¹⁸² John Bennett and Paul Tillich were also central figures in this noncommunist organization, which promoted socialism and Christian social theology.¹⁸³ While this group supported class-based analysis and “the aggressive assertion of the rights of the exploited and the disinherited,” they “hoped that class warfare could be avoided by all classes coming to recognize the need for radical social change.”¹⁸⁴ Among other things, they “called... to unite radical groups within the churches to strengthen their socialist influence,” and “to help the radical social movement to be more infused with ‘the religious spirit.’”¹⁸⁵ At the time of the 1951 organization of Christian Action, the group aspired “to draw together Protestants on the non-communist left for the implementation of the implications of the Gospel in social, economic, and political affairs.”¹⁸⁶

During these later years, the organization’s rolls reached a height of 1,200 members, spread throughout the United States and in eight other countries.¹⁸⁷ “Much of [Christian Action’s] energy was put into combating the McCarthy movement and spirit in the early 1950s,” including careful distancing of their agenda from Marxism, though the organization also

continued its moderately anti-capitalist critique.¹⁸⁸ For a variety of reasons, among them the development of denominational and NCC social action programs and the involvement of its leaders in a variety of other similar efforts, Christian Action's national office and its *Christianity and Society* publication closed down in 1956, although *Christianity and Crisis* - a publication with which Wilmore would later become deeply involved - carried on many of its emphases for decades afterward.¹⁸⁹

Wilmore has described Christian Action as a group of "Christian nonconformists and marginalized Black preachers" working in a "postwar climate of cutting-edge, activist theology," who played key roles "in the breakout of radical theology and socialism" in the early years of the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁹⁰ Wilmore said that Christian Action "sought briefly to be the Northern, interracial counterpart" to southern black racial justice organizations.¹⁹¹ Wilmore recalled that John Bennett and Reinhold Niebuhr "appointed me and Professor Kenneth 'Snuffy' Smith, Dr. King's influential teacher at Crozer Theological Seminary... to be co-chairpersons of the 'Delaware Valley Chapter' of Christian Action after the ill-fated organization's inaugural meeting in Philadelphia."¹⁹² Wilmore, perhaps drawing on the organization's failure to sustain itself as it competed for energy with other such organizations, referred to it as "only one of several left-of-center balloons that inflated and then collapsed in the turbulent atmosphere of world-changing ideas and energies."¹⁹³

The connection to Kenneth "Snuffy" Smith is an interesting one. Martin Luther King, Jr. was Student Body President at and a 1951 graduate of Crozer Theological Seminary, which at that time was in Chester, Pennsylvania - less than forty miles from Lincoln University and Oxford, and less than twenty miles from West Chester. Smith was a 1948 Crozer graduate who

then completed his Ph.D. coursework at Duke before returning to teach “Applied Christianity” and mentor King as the youngest faculty member at Crozer in the 1950-51 year.¹⁹⁴ In King’s final, Spring 1951 term at Crozer, two of his courses, “Christian Social Philosophy II,” and “Christianity and Society,” were with Smith.¹⁹⁵ The latter course focused especially on contemporary social issues, and in it King took a particular interest in how “the strategies of the past.... provided insights for the development of a Christian social ethic adequate to meet the needs of contemporary society.”¹⁹⁶ In debating King both in and outside of class, Smith often countered the former’s reliance on the ideas of Walter Rauschenbusch with his own preference for the Christian Realism of Reinhold Niebuhr.¹⁹⁷

While Wilmore himself did not meet King until 1965, both men graduated from seminaries in southeastern Pennsylvania within a year of each other, while the Wilmore brothers were at the height of their Oxford-West Chester Civil Rights activism. In fact, according to Patrick Parr, King even preached one of his last sermons as a Crozer student, in February 1951, at Fifth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, “at the invitation of a supply pastor named M. C. Spann,” Wilmore’s West Chester mentor.¹⁹⁸ During King’s February-May 1951 final term, Kenneth Smith taught and debated with King about Reinhold Niebuhr, Christian Realism, the relationship between Christianity and social issues, and strategies for activism. In September of that same year, Niebuhr and Bennett appointed Smith and Wilmore to head the local chapter of the new Christian Action organization, putting into practice the same ideas which Smith and King had so recently debated in the classroom. “Christian Action” did not itself effect much change, but its creative ideas and practices joined with Wilmore’s Lincoln, Oxford, West Chester, Tanguy, and other experiences as “balloons that inflated and then collapsed in the turbulent

atmosphere of world-changing ideas and energies,” laying the groundwork for his contributions to the coming movement for Civil Rights. These same ideas, filtered through the classroom of Kenneth “Snuffy” Smith, perhaps joined with local news reports about student sit-ins in nearby Oxford and school desegregation in West Chester, similarly stirred the mind of another budding racial justice scholar-activist, who would enter the national spotlight four years later through his leadership of a balloon which did not collapse: the Montgomery Bus Boycott.¹⁹⁹

Social Action and *Social Progress*

Joining the SEA: Advocates for Incrementalism and Church Desegregation

In December 1955, a few months after the death of Emmett Till and in the same month that Rosa Parks initiated the Montgomery Bus Boycott, after nearly four years in campus ministry, Wilmore left the SCM to join the staff of the Department of Social Education and Action (SEA), within the Board of Christian Education (BCE) of the Presbyterian Church (USA).²⁰⁰ The Wilmore family continued to live in Tanguy during this period.²⁰¹

Wilmore was hired as an expert on “industrial relations.” He had indeed done summer work during seminary with agricultural migrants and with the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations at the Labor Temple in New York City. On a personal level, Wilmore was keenly aware of the effects of poverty on his own family during his childhood. He had also been associated with the YCL, and, perhaps through his brother, with other socialist organizations and ideas. However, his post-seminary ministry had focused on congregational and campus ministry, neither of which prepared him particularly for his work with the SEA. It seems, therefore, that it was his work with Reinhold Niebuhr and John Bennett’s Christian Action which gave him the

professional qualifications for this position, especially given that the SEA's monthly journal, *Social Progress*, frequently printed articles by Bennett.

While Wilmore's connections to Second Presbyterian through Jesse Belmont Barber and to the SCM through Frank T. Wilson, Sr. were instrumental in both hires, it is not entirely clear how he transitioned the SEA job. However, his old professor and fellow member of the Council of the North and West, Shelby Rooks, was a member of the SEA's board at the time, and, more importantly, Frank Wilson was its chairman.²⁰² Marshal L. Scott, with whom Wilmore had worked at the Labor Temple as a seminarian, was also finishing a brief stint on the SEA's staff at the time. Edler Hawkins would join the board two years later.²⁰³

It is also possible that Wilmore's hire by the SEA was due to having already developed relationships with SEA staff through the Council of the North and West. After the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision and the Presbyterian Church (USA)'s swift endorsement of it, church officials might well have been looking to increase diversity on their staffs. Indeed Frank Wilson, who had been on the board as early as 1951, was elevated to be its chairman in September 1954, four months after the *Brown* decision. SEA staff in particular were among those white Presbyterians who already were closely connected to the Council of the North and West. As early as 1948, SEA executive Clifford Earle had addressed the Council on the subject of "Presbyterian Social Education and Action" at its annual meeting, as a part of an official report to the Council from the SEA.²⁰⁴ Marshal Scott, also white, spoke at the same meeting on the topic of "Social Education in Action."²⁰⁵ There Clifford Earle could have interacted with fellow speakers who were black and members of the Council, including James H. Robinson, Frank T. Wilson, Sr., John Dillingham, and Edler Hawkins.²⁰⁶ Among the speakers at the October 1954 meeting, held

at James Robinson's childhood church in Cleveland just months after the Brown decision, were the denomination's top official, Stated Clerk Eugene Carson Blake, as well as Clifford Earle.²⁰⁷

At this meeting, following the summary of the Council's history (as had been printed in the previous year's program as well), a passage was added, in bold, quoting from a statement by the World Council of Churches from its August 1954 meeting in Evanston, Illinois:

As we learn more about our unity in Christ, it becomes the more intolerable that we should be divided. Segregation in all its forms is contrary to the gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man, and with the nature of the Church of Christ. The church is urged to eliminate all forms of segregation and discrimination within its own life and in society. This is one of the objectives of our Council.²⁰⁸

This was the first meeting of the Council at which Wilmore was listed as a speaker. James Robinson, Milton Galamison, Jesse Belmont Barber, and Walter Bowen of McDowell Church also spoke.²⁰⁹ At the October 1955 meeting, the SEA's number two staffer, associate secretary Margaret "Maggie" Kuhn, addressed the Council, as a part of a session on "The Christian Community and Its World Mission."²¹⁰ Robinson, Bowen, Frank Wilson, and future associate Clarence Cave also spoke, as did Wilmore, the latter in a session on "The Christian Community and its Beliefs."²¹¹ A month later, Wilmore was appointed as one of the SEA's four key staff, along with Earle, Kuhn, and H. Ben Sissel. Again, the details around this hire are unclear, but given the timing, it is easy to imagine that Earle and Kuhn had attended the 1954 and 1955 Council of the North and West meetings at least partly in order to scout African American talent for their staff, especially in the aftermath of Brown v. Board. Perhaps Frank Wilson pointed them in Wilmore's direction and, having been impressed with Wilmore's addresses at both meetings - given that the article introducing the new staffer to readers of *Social Progress* noted his "unusual skill as a speaker" - and having inquired about him with other people they already knew like

Jesse Belmont Barber and Marshal Scott, as well as other SCM leaders, they made the hire.²¹² At that time, the PC (USA), at the national level, was not involved in direct action or other material support of Civil Rights activists, rather it saw its role as one of issuing church pronouncements, many of which were, nevertheless, supportive of desegregation and racial justice.²¹³ The SEA staff in particular was central to the task of formulating such pronouncements, despite the fact that they actually had no power to make such pronouncements themselves - rather they served in an advisory capacity to committees, elected as representatives of local churches, with church legislative power.²¹⁴

Like the SCM, the denomination also sponsored conferences and retreats which promoted racial reconciliation and dialogue as ways to combat white racism at a personal, relational level.²¹⁵ As noted in Chapter 1, Wilmore had attended at least one such conference at Lincoln University as a teenager in the late 1930s, where he had “play[ed] footsy across the color line, experiencing the warm fuzziness of interracial fellowship.”²¹⁶ In the 1950s, Wilmore shared the outlook of his white colleagues, who pushed for desegregation of churches and the denomination as a whole, in a relatively moderate, incremental fashion.²¹⁷ This quiet, almost irenic approach had been Gayraud’s style in his work with the SCM, Christian Action, and otherwise, despite his admiration for the more defiant style of his brother Jacques, James “Deac” Johnson, and Milton Henry, and the flashes of fire Gayraud had shown in his West Chester activism and in his private reflections on the effects of the Brown decision upon his fellow train commuters. Even at the 1950 pro-NAACP forum at Second Presbyterian, Jacques and another Lincoln student had led the meeting, and Gayraud was not one of the several people noted as speaking at the event - even though he must have been one of its key organizers.

There were also some interesting regional dynamics at play among Presbyterians, especially in terms of the SEA's interests in racial issues in both the North and the South. The denomination in which Wilmore had been raised, educated, and ordained, called the Presbyterian Church (USA) or PC (USA) at the time, consisted of most non-southern Presbyterians in the United States, as well as most African American Presbyterians in the U.S. South. White Presbyterians in the South were in a separate denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.) or PC (US), sometimes colloquially known as the Southern Presbyterian Church, which, like its governmental counterpart, had broken away from the national body during the Civil War era.²¹⁸ Because white Southerners were in a separate denomination, white Presbyterians' attitudes about race often recalled Civil War-era divisions. Northern white Presbyterians had relatively progressive views on race, but saw race as a "southern problem," the problem of another denomination. Southern white Presbyterians had more conservative views on race, and sometimes saw Northern white Presbyterians' engagement with racial issues in the South as "carpetbagging." While most black Presbyterians in the South and otherwise were in the same denomination, black Southerners were in all-black presbyteries, while black non-Southerners were a minority presence in majority-white Presbyteries, thus necessitating black non-Southerners' reliance on the Council of the North and West as a black caucus. Thus throughout most of Wilmore's career he served in a denomination which included white churches from the American North and West (outside the former Confederacy), and black churches throughout the nation including in the American South.²¹⁹

The PC (USA) leadership's incrementalist consensus reflected a degree of belief and hope in the power of reason and persuasion to spur social change which was prevalent in that era,

albeit difficult to comprehend from the contemporary vantage point and its entrenched political polarization. At that time Wilmore,

...believed generally what [white Presbyterian leaders] believed. Essentially, that the church needed to be desegregated at the local level (as well as its national and regional professional staff) and that it needed to continue to recommend and implement the Social Pronouncements of the General Assembly that brought it into a quiet and vaguely supportive role with the liberal or progressive wing of the National Democratic Party.²²⁰

Therefore the leadership's consensus was not only for incrementalism, it also prioritized the desegregation of churches at the local, congregational level.

Our first order of business, therefore, was to bring Black and other minority persons into white congregations in the cities, and to work to sponsor fair housing, desegregated neighborhoods and schools, and to provide better and fairer employment practices for non-whites in our central cities, North and South. To these ends our denomination worked... with the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the AFL-CIO, through institutions like the Labor Temple in New York City, and similar efforts to bring churches and unions together.... This historic, upper-middle class, overwhelmingly white and wealthy Protestant church was headed for the goal of racially integrated congregations in racially integrated and progressive urban contexts, working with dynamic secular movements to bring in, with the help of God, a healthy, ethical and peaceful world for generations to come.²²¹

These leaders were, therefore, interested in “fair housing” and “fairer employment practices,” and collaborations with other racial justice and labor groups (collaborations of the sort promoted by Reinhold Niebuhr's Christian Action), but the desegregation of communities and, especially, of churches were their top priorities in terms of racial issues.

A consensus in favor of optimistic integrationism was also reflected in the willingness of the Council of the North and West to cease to operate in this era. One leader in the Council, LeRoy Patrick, said,

We - all of us - were in a state of euphoria, a shameful confession for those to make who had studied under Niebuhr. The Supreme Court had spoken. The Church's pronouncements were unequivocal. Freedom had finally arrived. Segregation's death

knell had been sounded. Discrimination was over. Away with our little black organization. We would miss the fun, the fellowship, the camaraderie, but we had to give ourselves to the New Day.²²²

Wilmore said that black Presbyterians' optimism sprang from "the glow of an unprecedented era of good feeling," and that they were "beguiled and pacified by the attitudinal-change approach to race relations."²²³

Some other Presbyterians also saw the SEA as promoting an activist agenda, but were unhappy about it. According to Maggie Kuhn,

From the start, the department was controversial within the Church itself. When it was established in 1936, an editorial in *The Presbyterian*, a newspaper published by one Presbyterian faction, complained that the new department "sounds too communistic, or too fascistic or what you please, rather than Calvinistic or Christian."²²⁴

White Reformist Partners in the SEA

As an SEA staffer, Wilmore worked in the Witherspoon Building in Philadelphia, alongside several committed white allies - executive Clifford Earle and fellow staffers Maggie Kuhn, Ben Sissel, and a few others like Howard Maxwell.²²⁵ A major portion of the SEA's work was the publication of a monthly journal called *Social Progress*, founded in 1908, which described itself as "the oldest social action periodical in American Protestantism," and sought "to provide a forum for the church on subjects of social concern for Christians."²²⁶

The November 1955 issue, in an article by Earle, Kuhn, and Sissel and featuring a photo of Wilmore, introduced Wilmore as a new staff member, noting his education, military service, and ministry with Second Presbyterian and the SCM, as well as his "continuing interest in industrial relations and intercultural activities," interests shared by the SEA and *Social Progress*.

The editorial added that “he has unusual skill as a speaker and writer and as a group leader,” and he “will work with presbytery and synod leaders of social education and action in developing area programs and in encouraging social action in local churches.... an important service to which the Department has been unable to give adequate attention heretofore.”²²⁷ The headline article for that issue was by John C. Bennett, with whom Wilmore was already involved through Christian Action.²²⁸

The article introducing Wilmore underscored his intersectional interests in economic (“industrial”) and racial (“intercultural”) activism. Wilmore’s interest in “industrial relations” reflected his childhood experience of poverty and economic inequality in urban Philadelphia, his seminary field work both at the Labor Temple in New York City and with migrant workers in Pennsylvania, and his work with Christian Action. Race, or “intercultural activities,” had also been a continuing concern, from his childhood, military experience, activism at Lincoln and in West Chester, and SCM and Christian Action programming. This article also reflected Wilmore’s growing reputation as a speaker and a writer, and it indicated that one reason for Wilmore’s hire was to expand the BCE’s agenda from a merely journalistic one to one which involved engagement with people in local churches. SEA’s leadership felt that the department had focused too much on education rather than action, and Wilmore was tasked with rectifying that imbalance.

In keeping with the SEA’s strong emphasis on church desegregation, an unsigned editorial in this same issue included an article on racial integration in churches.²²⁹ The authors noted with approval the denomination’s new official policy as of 1955 “that every congregation shall be inclusive in its membership,” and stated that given this policy, “the concrete action taken

by presbyteries and local churches becomes particularly important lest the Report become ‘just another resolution.’”²³⁰ They provided suggestions for how this “Report” should be disseminated, and for how it should be given “appropriate context,” “such as the long history of General Assembly statements, the increasing number of inclusive Presbyterian churches..., the naturalness of such a policy for a Christian church of which Christ is the head, the unanimity of position of other denominational groups.”²³¹ However,

The real implementation of the Report in the local church..., will come only as the various groups in the congregation’s organized program study it carefully, discuss what it means for *them*, and put committees to work to carry out its provisions.²³²

They closed by saying, “The Report.... concretizes what has long been the concern of our Church. It will be meaningful in the local church or not at all.”²³³ SEA recognized the disconnect between church hierarchy and local churches, and the need for movement to a new kind of strategy for racial integration. Perhaps their hire of Wilmore as an African American also reflected a sense that if they were going to push for the integration of local churches, they should integrate their own staff as well.

One of Wilmore’s closest friends among his SEA coworkers was H. Ben Sissel. Sissel had been the staff’s specialist in race relations. Wilmore was ostensibly hired to focus on industrial relations and economics, and there was some ambiguity as to whether he would also cover race relations instead of Sissel. Sissel was “a bit sensitive about that, but he handled it beautifully,” as Wilmore indeed assumed some of the race relations coverage, especially in terms of “developing pronouncements” and “leading study groups and consultations,” and the two men became “fast friends.”²³⁴

Another close associate of Wilmore's on the SEA staff was Margaret "Maggie" Kuhn, who had joined the staff in the 1950.²³⁵ In her autobiography, Kuhn described the SEA as "the church's social conscience," which "was responsible for analyzing public issues and lobbying on the church's behalf."²³⁶ She wrote that during her tenure there in the 1950s-60s, "many Presbyterians, and Christians everywhere, were coming to believe that the churches must worry not just about individual morality, but about right and wrong in public affairs. It wasn't enough to just proclaim the Word, we had to go out and do it."²³⁷ Kuhn also said that in the SEA,


... my co-workers and I urged churchgoers to take progressive stands on important social issues: desegregation, urban housing, McCarthyism, the Cold War, nuclear arms. We believed that without powerful institutions like the Presbyterian Church advocating reform, many problems would go unsolved."²³⁸

Kuhn wrote that despite criticism by J. Howard Pew and other conservatives who were opposed to the basic idea of church involvement in social action, "we were often successful in getting the Assembly to adopt our proposals. During the '50s and '60s, the church came to be known for its enlightened stances on many issues, particularly civil rights."²³⁹ According to Kuhn, the SEA "took part in the organized fight for civil rights legislation, better housing in the cities, and government anti-poverty programs. There were many victories, and I look back on that era as testimony to the irrepressible power of the grass roots."²⁴⁰

Kuhn, probably referring to Earle, Sissel, Wilmore, and herself, wrote, "there were usually four of us working on the social education staff, all comrades in arms. I think we were the only department in the Witherspoon Building where everyone called each other by their first names."²⁴¹ She called Earle "an eloquent, serious man" who "spoke passionately about the need for laity and clergy to take an interest in social reform."²⁴² Kuhn is most well-known as the



Introducing Gayraud Wilmore



WE ARE happy to announce that Rev. Gayraud Wilmore will join the staff of the Department of Social Education and Action December, 1955.

For the last three years, Mr. Wilmore has served successfully as a regional secretary of the Student Christian Movement. He has been working with student groups on college and university campuses in the Middle Atlantic region. Prior to his present work he was minister of the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pennsylvania.

Figures 10-11. Gayraud Wilmore's introduction as a new SEA staffer, November 1955.

"From This Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore," *Social Progress*, vol. XLVI, no. 3, November 1955, p. 1, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

founder of the Gray Panthers, an organization which advocated for the rights of the elderly, after she was forced into retirement.²⁴³

Writing for *Social Progress*

In his writing for *Social Progress*, Wilmore served, officially, as the staff's economics expert. In a 1957 issue which included "brief reports on four issues" including economics, education, population, and race relations, Wilmore wrote the economics report, entitled "Our Expanding Economy." In it, he attacked consumerism and commercialism, criticized leaving economics to non-religious groups, and called for more sharing of wealth, including through foreign aid. He also listed a set of "provocative opinions" by various figures, including John C. Bennett.²⁴⁴ However, most of Wilmore's contributions to *Social Progress* focused not on economics but on issues of racial justice, and of church involvement in social/political action.

Wilmore's Writings on Race in Social Progress

Wilmore's first solo-authored piece in *Social Progress* was in the February 1956 issue, in the "worship" section of the publication, as a plan for a worship service entitled "For Freedom... Set us Free."²⁴⁵ That issue's focus was on "civil liberties and human rights." The scripture lessons were Amos 7:1-15, a passage reflecting prophetic speech against injustice, and 1 John 3:16-24, which includes a call to "love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action."²⁴⁶ Wilmore called attention to injustices in South Africa, and prayed for an end to "prejudice and race hatred," "forced servitude and genocide," and "exploitation and tyranny," and exhorted Christians to "stand shoulder-to-shoulder with those who writhe for deliverance in every corner

of the world.”²⁴⁷ In reference to a story from the November 1955 issue regarding pro-integration Presbyterian ministers being driven out of a Mississippi town - and, albeit unmentioned, in the early months of the Montgomery Bus Boycott - Wilmore also prayed that “while anyone suffers for speaking his mind, for upholding human rights, for defending civil liberties, make us, O Lord, uneasy in our inoffensive places. Grant us the courage and compassion to befriend all those cast out and under persecution, that in the fellowship of their suffering we may be healed.”²⁴⁸

Social Progress issues always began with a brief editorial, which sometimes was authored by a particular staffer, but usually was signed, “SEA Staff.” Many of these editorials reflected Wilmore’s writing style, indicating that he at least had a hand in writing many of them. Wilmore’s writing often includes several stylistic idiosyncrasies. Among these are the frequent use of quotation marks around key terms, of language which draws on militaristic metaphors (such as “reconnaissance” or “the enemy”), of the particular term “maelstrom,” of the prefix “quasi-,” and of a list followed by an exclamation point at the end of a paragraph.²⁴⁹ In some cases, however, the best argument for Wilmore’s authorship is whether an anonymous article reflects the Wilmore’s typical concerns, as seen in his other writings. One such anonymous article, from March 1957, addressed segregation, saying, “racial segregation is a problem of such size and urgency that it dwarfs all other social issues in American life today.”²⁵⁰ The writer added,

As for the urgency of the problem, let us remember that racial discrimination has in it an element of cruelty. It is compounded of separate acts of humiliation. These, through determined repetition, become a pattern, a cage, in which freedom is stifled.²⁵¹

While Ben Sissel or another staffer may have written this passage, Wilmore was the only black staffer, the only one who had experienced such cruelty firsthand. He has also often reflected

elsewhere, such as, for example, in his 1965 speech in Montreat, North Carolina on the Watts Rebellion (see Chapter 3), and in *Pragmatic Spirituality*, on the humiliation his family had experienced as a result of racism and poverty in 1920s-30s Philadelphia (see Chapter 1).

This editorial also noted that massive resistance to the Brown decision had “uncovered some of the ugly realities of racial discrimination in American life.”²⁵² It called for special church attention to residential segregation, especially in northern cities. It also included several criticisms of church complicity in racial segregation, including the all-white nature of the faculties and boards of Presbyterian colleges, pointing out that “we know of only one of our colleges (besides those designed to serve Negro students) that has a Negro person on its teaching staff, and none with a Negro director.”²⁵³ Wilmore himself would join the teaching staff of a Presbyterian seminary three years later. This editorial also discussed the need for Christian organizations to work with secular organizations for social change within a pluralistic society - a concern which would be central to Wilmore’s first book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (1962).²⁵⁴ A September 1957 issue focusing on desegregation again included an editorial by the “SEA Staff,” which likewise reflected Wilmore’s writing style and concerns. It again called “racial segregation” the nation’s “most urgent domestic issue,” and said,

... the churches are being tested by this issue and will be tested for the next decade or more. If the churches do not respond in faithfulness, they may remain (even flourish) as institutions, but will they not cease to be the living church of Christ through which God speaks and acts?²⁵⁵

Wilmore’s tendency to use quotation marks around key terms, and the frequency of such marks in this editorial and in other anonymous articles in this issue suggest he may have written much of this issue. For example, this editorial also said,

The pronouncements proclaim not only a goal (“a nonsegregated church and a nonsegregated society”) but also “way stations” along the road to that goal (school desegregation, fair employment practices, voting rights, “color-blind” evangelism). To be faithful is to respond in obedience to God where we are in our situation....²⁵⁶

Wilmore’s Writings on the Church and Social/Political Action in Social Progress

The bulk, by far, of Wilmore’s writings for *Social Progress* addressed the church’s relationship to social and political issues, and appropriate ways for churches to intervene in such issues. This was, of course, the main focus of the SEA in general. For example, the staff’s editorial in the December 1955 issue, the first issue published after Wilmore had joined the staff, was titled “The Minister’s Role.”²⁵⁷ It emphasized the need for local ministers to be involved in social education and action, and provided suggestions for how they might do so. Regardless of the extent to which Wilmore was involved in this article’s authorship, it likely resonated with his own experience in congregational ministry. It said, “Most ministers are reasonably alive to their responsibility in this phase of the Church’s witness.... They feel that the Church ought to do something about the social forces that bear up on the lives of people....”²⁵⁸ It also lamented that “many ministers go from pastorate to pastorate without taking time to... set down definite goals for their lifework,” for, “it is so easy for the minister to be caught up in a maelstrom of expediency and frustration... without a definite plan for his life or deeper purpose,” and it offered to assist ministers to “find a clue to greater usefulness and more purposeful service in the Kingdom,” so that ministers’ work could “be really relevant to the problems of the world.”²⁵⁹ As a pastor in West Chester, Wilmore, like the local church pastors who are the audience of this editorial, had been concerned about and even focused on social action, but could not figure out how to engage his congregation on such issues, how to balance his own attention between social

action and other congregational concerns, or how to render his ministry there sustainable over the long haul. In West Chester, he had been “caught up in a maelstrom of expediency and frustration” at the roadblocks he encountered, and it was not until his work with the SEA that he settled into the vocation which would, in various ways, occupy him for the rest of his career: writing and speaking about and organizing people around issues of church involvement in racial and social justice. The interest in this article in the “relevance” of churches and ministry in the wider world would also become the central theme of his book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, and would become a major part of his CORAR work as well as his involvements in the Black Power movement and Black Theology.

The October 1956 issue included the first full *Social Progress* article by Wilmore, as well as the first time his writing was advertised on the journal’s cover. This issue focused on politics, and included, as its other two “features,” a re-printed NCC statement on politics and an article by Senator Clinton P. Anderson.²⁶⁰ The staff’s editorial sounded a lot like Wilmore and his first book. It criticized uninformed voting, the concept of “Christian politics” which advocated for more Christians in office and thus implied that non-Christians were “unfit for public responsibility,” and clarified that the PC (USA)’s own political lobbying should seek “to be influential without controlling,” recognizing “a sense of the ‘legitimate secularity’ of the world’s business.”²⁶¹

Wilmore’s own article in this issue was entitled, “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms,” and involved the side-by-side printing of the 1956 Democratic and Republican Party platforms along with the statements of the PC (USA)’s General Assembly (G.A.) on similar issues, accompanied by some comments by Wilmore.²⁶² Wilmore argued that the two parties had come

“embarrassingly close together.”²⁶³ He noted that Republicans were more accepting of the Brown decision than Democrats.²⁶⁴ He criticized both platforms, saying they “leave much to be desired in terms of incisiveness,” and that,

...the universality of this practice... does illustrate the fact that we tend to want simple idealistic solutions to complex problems and often make it incumbent upon our leaders to pretend that such solutions are possible.²⁶⁵

This statement reflected Wilmore’s ongoing interest in complexity and nuance, and concern for the fact that others did not appreciate either - an issue which would resurface again during the Black Power era. Wilmore noted that the G.A. “is in favor of more progressive legislation of a social and economic character and for increased co-operation and assistance in foreign affairs,” and asserted that “not nearly enough was said in either platform about the latter concern.”²⁶⁶ The issues on which Wilmore compared the three groups’ positions included international affairs, race, economics, education, and civil liberties.

In this same issue, Wilmore again prepared the worship section, entitled, “Worship to Stay in the World: A Service of Worship in Preparation for Political Activity.”²⁶⁷ He criticized Christians’ “pious aloofness,” and “high-minded spirituality” as they “have lived as though to be not of the world meant that we should isolate ourselves from the problems of the world,” and that they “have bypassed its needs and escaped its responsibilities,” as “Behind the closed doors of our churches our hymns have drowned out the cry of anguish in the streets.”²⁶⁸ He also asked for a transition from “fatuous optimism” to “crucial realism” and that Christians might “perceive the sacredness of the works of our hands” and become “obedient in action and confident in grace where opposing wills and tensions are the necessities of involvement.”²⁶⁹

The November 1956 issue included an article signed by the SEA Staff, entitled “Social Strategy for the Local Church,” which included Wilmore’s typical concerns and style, thus indicating that he had at least a major hand in it. It criticized limiting church social responsibility to a small, specialized group.²⁷⁰ It said,

New members should be helped to understand that Christian faith is relevant to “the issues of life,” that Christians are expected to honor Christ in every area of their living, that political and social matters are not out of bounds for the church because the church is interested in everything that affects the lives of men and women and children, that the Presbyterian Church has a record for being outspoken and forthright in dealing with social problems, even the most “sensitive” and controversial.²⁷¹

One passage in the article sounded especially like Wilmore’s later *Secular Relevance of the Church*:

By suggesting that there should be a local church committee on social education and action we are by no means saying that the program of SEA in the local church should be distinct and separate from the ongoing program of the church or should occur outside of the educational program. The purpose of the committee is not to set up a separate program but rather to provide for appropriate emphasis and integration of social education and action in all of the life and work of the local church. The committee’s function may be regarded as that of reconnaissance and co-ordination - studying the community, analyzing the issues, “resourcing” the organized groups in the church with respect to social education and action, providing for appropriate church representation in community groups. The important thing is that social education and action should occur where the people of the church are - in the ongoing program, in the regular activities for men, women, youth.²⁷²

“Reconnaissance” as a metaphor for church social action would be a major theme of his 1962 *Secular Relevance of the Church*. This wording indicated, again, that Wilmore had made a major contribution to the writing of this article. Since this article drew heavily on the December 1955 issue, it is likely that Wilmore either wrote much of that previous issue, or that he drew heavily on that issue in writing this article. This article also revealed that by November 1956 he had already begun formulating the ideas which would become his 1962 book.

Also in the November 1956 issue was an article by Wilmore entitled “The Pennsylvania Story.” This article was a progress report on “four simultaneous pilot projects by Pennsylvania Presbyterians focusing on social education and action.”²⁷³ The idea for these projects came from a pastor in Scranton, toward the idea of moving “presbytery chairmen out of the letter-writing, report-reading concept of leadership to engage with others in projects which encourage corporate study and witness.”²⁷⁴ Several of the projects made race a major focus.

Another unsigned article in December 1956 reflected some of Wilmore’s typical concerns. This was a piece on the Magnificat:

There is a striking difference between Mary’s prophetic insight into the meaning of the event of the incarnation and our conventional observance of Christmas in America. The heresy of commercialization should not trouble us overmuch - that is the world’s business, after all. What should concern us as churchmen is the Church’s sentimentality about Christmas. While we mesmerize ourselves with pageantry - cute little angels forgetting their lines, Kings of Orient, tinsel stars, stable scenes, and shepherd choirs - the sonorous cadences of the Magnificat speak of the mighty power of God. “He has scattered the proud... filled the hungry... the rich he has sent empty away.” What did Mary know about the coming of Christ and the sickness of society that we have forgotten - or never known?²⁷⁵

Concerns about secularism and commercialization featured prominently in Wilmore’s first book, and he has maintained a lifelong interest in biblical prophets.²⁷⁶

The April 1958 issue included another article solo-authored by Wilmore, “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe.” The issue itself focused on “The Social Responsibilities of Christians in Daily Work.” Wilmore’s article focused on a character in a novel, a test pilot of a fully automated plane, who was therefore “practically useless. *He just goes along for the ride.*”²⁷⁷ Wilmore contended that “test pilots are not the only people today whose identity and dignity as persons are threatened by subordination to nonpersonal factors - whether

it be the automatic world of telemeters and Univac, or to the equally automatic world of large-scale organizations and suburbia.”²⁷⁸ He added that “daily work offers the layman his greatest opportunity for witness to culture,” so we must recognize “the total cultural situation in which people are involved today.”²⁷⁹ “What do we mean when we say that Christ has sanctified the secular vocation of the Christian?”²⁸⁰

Despite the fact that many laymen believe that they are able to live “happy, useful Christian lives,” and that there is really nothing so wrong with America that a little old-fashioned piety won’t cure, some observers of the contemporary scene are dubious. If there is something redemptive about the daily work of the Christian man, it is becoming increasingly difficult to see what it is in the present situation - a situation which, for all its programs of “social responsibility” and its “back to God” crusades in government and business, has made our traditional ways of speaking about Christian vocation words that have almost no point of reference in the real world of every day.²⁸¹

Wilmore wrote that early modern Protestant idea that the laborer has the

...same responsibility for the ministry of the gospel as do monks and preachers, has never greatly impressed the laity, except to give them the queasy feeling that they ought to be talking about Christ during the lunch hour rather than kibitzing about the pennant race or the latest “do it yourself” power tool. For most people, there is the job and there is the church. And like the job and that other world - the home (perhaps twenty commuting miles away) - job and church have increasingly little to do with each other.²⁸²

He added that “We have much more to do if we are to help laymen understand that Jesus Christ has reconciled these two worlds from their estrangement from God and from each other.”²⁸³ He referred to the “drudgery” and “monotony” of work, and to Sabbath rest, and said, “there are some jobs (and some moments on every job...) where all one can perceive is the judgment of God... None may know better the meaning of the Biblical teaching that human work is laid under a curse: ‘In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread’ (Gen. 3:17-19).”²⁸⁴

Wilmore also referred to “the irrelevance of moral exhortation,” saying,

We teach our people independence, industry, and frugality, only to see them swept away by a skyrocketing standard of living which emphasizes the conspicuous consumption of material things and the mass conformity of suburban living. We work hard for years to build a great urban congregation, only to see it disintegrate in panic as Negroes burst through the walls of mid-city ghettos, while churchgoing realtors and brokers tighten the white noose around the suburbs for a last-ditch stand.²⁸⁵

He expressed concern that clergy often were “without real awareness of what is happening to their laymen” in their daily occupations.²⁸⁶ He warned that,

... we are caught in a cultural trap, which in terms of its tyranny, its separation from its Judaeo-Christian sources, its inexorable power and inevitability, has all of the hallmarks of what the New Testament understands as the demonic. Like [the test pilot], we are all *going along for the ride*.²⁸⁷

The solution, according to Wilmore, was “helping the layman to be aware of what is going on,” “to search out... those conspiracies of resistance to the demon job which will support the united action of the church in its attempt to influence the structures of economic and political power.”²⁸⁸

He warned that,

...the reality of politico-economic structures, the necessity of integrated policy and corporate action to influence them, should make evident to the church, once and for all, that preaching a simplistic moralism about “serving Christ on the job” to persons as self-determining isolates in simple face-to-face relationships will keep Christians powerless in the teeth of the cultural problems which are undercutting our ministry every day.²⁸⁹

He said,

...the layman needs most of all to be helped to discover his real situation, in what kind of world he is living and working, who he is, and what his illusions are. Not until he finds out who the real enemy is will he be able to help the churches devise a common strategy for extricating him from the most serious challenges of culture to faith.²⁹⁰

There is considerable overlap between many of these concepts and Wilmore’s first book.

Wilmore suggested “three areas of inquiry” to help laymen think about these issues, the first of which was “the freedom of persons.”²⁹¹ He said,

... as we look at the “system” under which we work, what is there about it that grates on human personality as Christians understand it? Are there hidden assumptions in the philosophy of the job which rob the worker of his identity as a responsible person and make him a cog in a smooth-running machine?²⁹²

He suggested that there were “subtle ways in which the corporation encourages the layman to believe and act as though the corporation were “God.”²⁹³ He expressed concern that Christian laymen were more loyal to their employers than to “human values and the prophetic teachings of the faith that recognizes justice and welfare of all men as the basis of the good society.”²⁹⁴ He lamented a case in Pittsburgh of church officers employed as realtors who, when asked to aid an African American journalist in moving to an all-white community, admitted that such aid was mandated by their faith, but declared themselves “unable” to provide it.²⁹⁵ He suggested that this case proved the need for social restructuring led by the church, not just individual effort. Wilmore stated that one major way laypeople could contribute to this mission was “to take every opportunity to become aware - to gain intelligence for the church’s mission of delivering a more authentic critique upon the culture and becoming more wise in how to combat tyrannical powers...”²⁹⁶ He added,

...this task of providing the church with intelligence for the formulation of corporate strategy is important. It is the “spying out of the land” or “testing of the spirits,” to use two Biblical images in a modern context. It is essentially and peculiarly the task of the laity. The men and women who ride the commuter trains into the urban jungle each day, who punch the time clock in the sprawling Government buildings or in huge manufacturing plants, know better than their clergy what is possible and not possible for man as a “worker for Christ” in the world of the twentieth century.²⁹⁷

Again, there is considerable overlap between these ideas and Wilmore’s first book, especially in translating the militaristic idea of “reconnaissance” into Christian terms.

Christian Politics and Defending Radicals

Two articles by Wilmore in the latter years of his writing for *Social Progress* touched on themes which would take on greater significance for his activities in the 1960s: Christian engagement with politics, and, as with his defense of Milton Henry, a defense of the rights of oppressed peoples, even which such peoples included radical elements among them.

The June 1960 issue included Wilmore's last article for *Social Progress* as an SEA staff member, entitled, "The Christian in Organization Politics: An Interview with a Big-City Politician."²⁹⁸ In this article, Wilmore again addressed his longstanding interests in politics, through an interview with Philadelphia City Councilman Tom McIntosh. The article did not say whether McIntosh and Wilmore knew each other before the interview, but they likely crossed paths on several occasions. McIntosh was a few months older than Wilmore, also from North Philadelphia, a member of Wilmore's 1940 Central High graduating class, and a student at Lincoln University before being drafted in 1943. He was also a Presbyterian, and was actually "a member and trustee of the Tioga United Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia," into which McDowell Church had been merged during the 1950s.²⁹⁹

Wilmore described McIntosh as a "hard-hitting career politician who knows what big-city politics are all about."³⁰⁰

Councilman McIntosh is an "organization man" and makes no bones about it. His belief that the organization "renders service to the people" is a part of his confession of faith as a Christian. But he has not relaxed the tension in his own search to discover what it means to be a Christian in machine politics. He worked his way up from the bottom of the ladder of the Democratic Party in Philadelphia, beginning his career in politics as a student at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania."³⁰¹

McIntosh, a graduate of Temple University's Law School, had been elected to City Council for the first time in the previous year, beginning a three-term career on the council (1959-1971).³⁰²

This interview "powerfully suggests the main lines of his thinking about the importance of organization politics and the role of a Christian layman who has been called to that vocation."

McIntosh said he preferred the term "political organization" to "machine."³⁰³

Wilmore said, "I suppose you know that many church people believe it is better that individuals try to achieve a good society without machine politics," and McIntosh countered that such a view did not make sense in a complex modern society.³⁰⁴ McIntosh criticized the idea of everyone in government seeing themselves as "an autonomous individual."³⁰⁵ Wilmore asked him what would happen if, "as a Christian, there is a conflict between your own point of view and the organization's policy."³⁰⁶ When McIntosh responded by saying that the party makes a decision and people are then bound by the majority opinion of the party, Wilmore asked, "Is there some Christian insight in your judgment about this? It seems so to me."³⁰⁷ McIntosh referred to humility, "realization of human sin," the benefit of collective judgment, and the fact that someone can leave the party if their objections are too strong.³⁰⁸

Wilmore asked "what ethical guidelines govern" the organization, "about those who are in it purely for selfish reasons," and about the importance of justice and the legitimate aspirations of people."³⁰⁹ After McIntosh talked about being called upon frequently to address the concerns of particular communities, especially considering the low-income and low-education demographics of his district, Wilmore said, "I imagine this sort of intensive work has something to do with the dirty word 'patronage.'"³¹⁰ McIntosh argued that political patronage was a legitimate practice, albeit prone to abuse. Wilmore then said, "we have been talking all around

the question of power. I wonder if you would comment on the problem of power in organization politics.”³¹¹ Wilmore also asked about “the function of the political ‘boss,’” a term which McIntosh called “derogatory,” preferring “political leader” instead.³¹² Wilmore also said, “in a way you seem to be carrying out a pastoral ministry that is somewhat comparable to that of a clergyman.”³¹³ Wilmore’s last question was, “what do you think is the role of the churches in politics?”³¹⁴ In the 1960s, Wilmore would become a major player in the racial justice politics of his denomination and nation, and would continue to wrestle with how to balance his Christian idealism with the pragmatism of power politics.

In the March 1958, Wilmore attended a consultation on theology and evangelism sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Switzerland.³¹⁵ Afterwards, he traveled to the Middle East, where he visited three U.N. camps in Lebanon for Palestinian refugees.³¹⁶ His overseas travels in connection with issues of global human rights were contemporaneous with overseas travels, especially to Ghana, by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1957), Malcolm X (1958), and Pauli Murray (1960-61), among others.³¹⁷

Wilmore reflected on his experience at the refugee camps later that year, in *Social Progress*. He highlighted poor conditions in the camps, and said that “Arab governments’ refusal to negotiate with Israel” was to blame for refugees receiving “no recompense for the lands and homes they left in Palestine.”³¹⁸ Despite this stance, Wilmore sounded more sympathetic in pointing out that refugees were “nursing bitter feelings toward those whom they hold responsible for their plight.”³¹⁹ Perhaps also recalling the slums of North Philadelphia, Wilmore said, “I have seen many migrant agricultural workers’ slums in the U.S., but never such miserable housing as this.”³²⁰

At a meeting between Wilmore and “about fifteen of the leading men of the camps,” Wilmore “could sense an air of expectancy. There was steam under pressure in this little room and I was going to have the opportunity to see it blow off.”³²¹ After Wilmore was introduced to the men,

...thereupon followed the most bitter and vituperative attack on the United States that I have ever heard. Did the people of the United States think that this life in the refugee camps could be endured much longer? Did the people of the United States know that their foreign policy was playing into the hands of the imperialistic ambitions of Israel? Whose side were we on anyway? Why were we so ambiguous and inconsistent in our Near East policy statements? Is it not demonstrably true that they of all the people in the world were the most mistreated, oppressed, and deceived? Were not these very Jews who had robbed them of homes, lands, and livelihood now being celebrated, protected, and coddled by American money and power? For a full half hour I took the full brunt of the attack as, in their angry eyes, the representative of the American Government which had betrayed them. At one point one of the most excited of the leaders exclaimed: “Suppose we should keep you in these dungeons by force! Hold you prisoner! Perhaps your family would become alarmed and then the American Government would see how we live and die in these miserable conditions!”³²²

Wilmore had some experience serving as the overseas representative of the U.S., during his military service, an experience which, as much as any other, had soured him on the gulf between his nation’s ideals and its practices, including the ways white Americans had deployed their power to colonize African Americans within their own borders, even as they forced African Americans to fight fascism overseas.³²³ Eventually, these Palestinian refugees shifted from encountering Wilmore as a representative of the U.S. government, to joining Wilmore in a mutual recognition of their kinship as fellow victims of white supremacy and colonialism.

The encounter became very tense at several points. At last I was permitted to speak and I did, haltingly and with dwindling conviction in the validity of my arguments. I tried weakly to assure them of our concern - especially the concern of the churches. I tried to explain the difficult position of the U.S. Government in the Middle East cross fire. I tried to remind them of the dereliction of the Arab states vis-a-vis the refugee resettlement program. Tempers cooled visibly and a new phase of discussion suddenly commenced

when someone identified me with the “suffering people of color” all over the world who, like themselves, were the objects of the prejudice and tyranny of the white people of the West.³²⁴

Wilmore described the refugees as experiencing a “sense of hopelessness, and of abandonment.”³²⁵ He said, “What they demand is action. Action to persuade Israel to accept them without condition and to reinstate them on the lands which they left in Palestine,” arguing that “whether or not one attributes the plight of the Palestinian refugees to Israel or to the Arab nations, the grievances and impatience of the refugees themselves have to be respected and reckoned with.”³²⁶ He concluded that, “...the American churches have an important role to play in the public discussions and formulation of American foreign policy which will deal more radically and imaginatively with the worsening problem of the Arab refugees.”³²⁷

The most interesting piece of this refugee encounter was as follows:

There was no doubt that some of the phraseology bantered in that conversation was manufactured in the propaganda mills of Moscow and Cairo. Yet I would hastily add that these people were not communists. There may have been communists among them, but for the most part these men were Arab nationalists who were as distrustful of the East as they were of the West. Their burning conviction - the injustice of their own situation which was daily permitted by the great powers. Their overarching concern and desire - the absolute destruction of the state of Israel.³²⁸

Wilmore was faced with a situation of injustice among people of color suffering in part because of the white supremacy of U.S. institutions. He recognized that some of these people of color were radicals and many more were presumed to be radicals by most white Americans. He responded by sympathetically describing the reality of their dire conditions, dismissing concerns about their radicalism, and calling for those in power to listen to their cries. He also recognized the similarities between their conditions - especially in terms of racial and economic oppression - and those in which he had grown up in North Philadelphia. This was the same pattern he had

used during his college days to defend the radical, disrespectable NAACP activist Milton Henry from Wilmore's influential position as editor of *The Lincolnian*. He would return to this pattern several more times over the next thirteen years, especially amid the Presbyterian Church's engagement with the Black Power movement, as he defended the Watts rebels in 1965, the Marxist James Forman in 1969, and the Communist Angela Davis in 1971.³²⁹

Student and Teacher

Drew, Temple, and Pittsburgh

As a member of the SEA staff, Wilmore was impressed by the intellectual training of his coworkers, and felt under-educated by comparison.³³⁰ He had also already completed his STM degree at Temple (during his West Chester pastorate), and had been working on his first book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, both ventures which indicated his continuing interest in further academic work. Therefore, in the Fall Semester of 1960, he enrolled full-time in a doctoral program at Drew Theological Seminary, choosing that school in order to study with George Kelsey, "one of the very few Black scholars working with doctoral students anywhere in the U.S."³³¹ At the same time, he accepted an appointment as Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary (PTS).³³² PTS hired him with the understanding that he would spend the year completing his doctorate (or at least his coursework) at Drew, and would then come to Pittsburgh to teach.³³³ He left the SEA and *Social Progress* in September 1960.³³⁴

Wilmore has said that he "first learned about social ethics from two professors at Drew," George Kelsey and Will Herberg.³³⁵ Wilmore noted that Kelsey "wrote a highly successful text we all used in those days," referring to *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*

(1965).³³⁶ According to Wilmore, these scholars “worked together and impressed me with their challenging perspectives,” despite the fact that Kelsey “pretty much ignored [Wilmore] during that year.”³³⁷ As was evident in his writing for *Social Progress*, Wilmore had already been at work on the ideas which would become his first book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (1962), an analysis of the church’s social responsibilities and how it should relate to secular society, and in fact Wilmore seems to have finished the manuscript prior to his matriculation. However, Wilmore ruefully attributed Kelsey’s lack of regard for him to Wilmore’s own arrogance as a new author. Wilmore recalled that he “stupidly walked into my first class with him with a finished book in my hands,” *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, which the typically self-effacing Wilmore called “the juvenile work from which I taught my first classes” at PTS.³³⁸ He later wrote, “How stupid could I have been to hope to become a favorite student of George Kelsey and Will Herberg - puffed up, insistent that those two master ethicists acknowledge” his own book, as a first-year doctoral student.³³⁹ Apparently Wilmore did not discuss this *faux pas* any further with either professor, and left Drew a year later “without a word of explanation to anyone.”³⁴⁰ He transferred his credits to Temple University.³⁴¹ The Wilmores then moved to Pittsburgh in 1961, and Gayraud split his time between teaching at PTS and traveling to Philadelphia to complete his coursework at Temple.³⁴² Despite his difficulties in connecting with George Kelsey, Wilmore still respected and learned from the senior scholar.

... his book, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, greatly influenced my thinking. He called racism a form of religion and therefore an idolatry diametrically opposed to Christianity because it does not respect the fundamental truth that God has created all human beings in God’s own image and that they are equal in God’s sight. The attack on racism that Kelsey chose, and I think rightly, was a theological one, which said that racism is a false religion, an apostasy fundamentally opposed to Christian doctrine.³⁴³

At Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, where he was officially on the faculty from 1960 but only in residence from 1961 to 1963, Wilmore “tried [his] hand at teaching the rudiments of Social Ethics while Dr. King and various Black leaders in the South were testing the foundations of Christian social action by turning the world upside down.”³⁴⁴ Wilmore was the seminary’s first black professor, and, with Herbert King of McCormick Theological Seminary, was one of only two black professors at predominantly white U.S. Presbyterian seminaries at the time.³⁴⁵ Eugene G. Turner was a student of Wilmore’s at PTS, and a fellow army veteran.³⁴⁶ Turner, who was enrolled from 1959 to 1962, was the only black student at PTS during his own first two years there, making him the only black student at the time of Wilmore’s appointment.³⁴⁷ Wilmore and Turner “spent a lot of valuable time together” there, and eventually became close lifelong friends.³⁴⁸ Turner recalled of his favorite professor,

His classes... were very good for me as I struggled with questions about my future life in the ministry. Gay was a strong influence on me and a few other students at the seminary, although many White students viewed him as too liberal. These young White seminarians had never had a Black man challenge their thoughts about the humanity of all of God's people. Looking back, I think they simply did not want to hear a word about God's sense of justice for all. I often got pulled into debates regarding some of Gay's ideas about Black liberation theology that had been mentioned or discussed in the classroom. In other words, the White students often came to me in an attempt to restore that which had been their reality, but I never ever agreed with them.³⁴⁹

Wilmore similarly recalled that Turner relayed to him what the white students were saying about their professor behind his back. A decade later, Wilmore and Turner worked together in securing the denomination’s financial support for the legal defense of Angela Davis, and in responding afterward to the white backlash to that grant.

Between teaching and doctoral study, Gayraud did not have time for involvement in social action during the Pittsburgh era, though Lee was quite involved with a community

organization. The family attended a church which was actively involved in social issues, pastored by a former leader of the now defunct/dormant Council of the North and West, LeRoy Patrick, and Wilmore maintained connections to other church leaders and social activists in the city during his time there.³⁵⁰

Secular Relevance

Gayraud Wilmore never finished his doctoral degree, largely because of his work with CORAR from 1963 to 1972. However, he did publish his first book, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, in 1962.³⁵¹ It was the first book published in a series, “Christian Perspectives on Social Problems,” of which Wilmore was the editor.³⁵² It fit well with the general mission of the SEA; indeed many of the ideas in this book were already evident in his 1955-60 writing for *Social Progress*, and he must have written most of it while on the SEA staff since, according to Wilmore, his manuscript was complete by the time he matriculated at Drew in 1960.

In the book, Wilmore explicitly took “laymen” as his audience, and sought to help them “*think theologically*” about social problems.³⁵³ He criticized laymen for being “obsessed” with their own personal and family problems, as opposed to “public issues” like social justice, but said that a significant minority of laymen were actually interested in learning more about the relationship between Christianity and society.³⁵⁴ He expressed hope that his book would provide “an unsettling reading experience” and stimulate group study and discussion, and each chapter closed with discussion questions to aid in this goal.³⁵⁵

Aside from this basic focus on the church and social issues, two other aspects of the work are notable from the outset. First, Wilmore was careful to make clear that he believed the “hope

of this world” was in God, not in human effort or “works righteousness,” reflecting the emphases of the Reformed, Christian Realist theology of Reinhold Niebuhr.³⁵⁶ Second, Wilmore justified his call for Christian social action using a military metaphor, saying, “if here the church is asked to issue fewer Bibles and more bandoliers it is only because it has become too easy to be a ‘soldier of Christ’ in a stained-glass USO while the battle rages in the streets.”³⁵⁷ Wilmore continued with such military metaphors throughout this book, and in other subsequent writings, a practice which reflected his military background, and revealed that he viewed his vocation of struggle for racial and social justice in church and society as militaristic in some ways - as a difficult campaign, fought alongside comrades-in-arms, against a determined opposition, experiencing victories, defeats, casualties, sacrifice, and soul-searching along the way.

The first chapter is entitled, “The Protestant Trap.”³⁵⁸ Wilmore began this chapter, and the book, with this question: “Can the church of Christ, as represented in this discussion by the Protestant churches, become an effective influence for basic change and reconstruction in a highly technological, secularized society?”³⁵⁹ This has been a major question for Wilmore throughout his career - whether the church can be an influence for positive social change. Wilmore said that this question assumes,

...that for all the scattered evidence of Protestant interest in “being involved” in the solution of social problems, Protestant churches continue to understand the nature and mission of the church in terms of preaching Sunday sermons, saving souls, and inculcating the moral standards of a traditionalistic and rural society. There is among most Protestant churches, consequently, a studied avoidance of the role of organizing institutional power and a commitment to social action as a basic strategy of mission. The question we must immediately face, therefore, is whether such a church can ever hope to have any considerable influence in the struggle for freedom and justice in a revolutionary world.³⁶⁰

This comment reflected Wilmore's growing frustration in the late 1950s, shared to some extent by his fellow SEA staff, with the slow pace of their denomination's "moral suasion" efforts for racial and social justice, after the initial euphoria over the Brown decision and the denomination's unambiguous endorsement of it. Perhaps Wilmore had his eye on the innovative nonviolent direct action methods of the SCLC in the Montgomery Campaign and SNCC in its student-led sit-ins, which recalled the Lincoln students' "Operation Oxford." Wilmore's criticisms of individual churches' avoidance of social action likely also reflects the challenges he faced in West Chester, both in trying to encourage his own members to engage in Christian social action, and in trying to justify his involvement in social action in the face of the oversight of white Christians, perhaps including Robert B. Boell, who thought pastors should stay out of politics.

Wilmore wrote that he was not questioning whether "individual persons are of ultimate concern to God and should be the object of the mission of the church," nor was he asking "whether or not the church of Christ can dominate secular society, whether it can today undertake political action as a full-blown political party, or erect a new 'Christian economic system' to replace present systems."³⁶¹ He called such proposals "dubious possibilities for the church."³⁶² *Social Progress* had criticized such forms of "Christian politics" and often clarified that the denomination in its official political work did not seek such "dominance," even though it did seek influence.³⁶³ Wilmore went on,

Our question is, rather, whether a religion that speaks only about love, humility, sobriety, personal integrity, honesty, and other individualistic virtues has any real possibility of changing the world in which we live. We are asking whether these otherwise honorable virtues have any possibility of relevant meaning or of realization in a rationalized, technological society unless the churches recover a comprehensive cultural vocation that

has a great deal more to say than this, and is able to speak through social and political action.³⁶⁴

Wilmore thus distanced himself from the beliefs of Billy Graham and other white evangelicals that social change only comes from converting individuals to Christianity. Indeed, he explicitly wondered whether “the old theology,” with its “traditional themes” of “personal salvation and individualistic morality,” perhaps less powerful but still significant at that time, could cope with social problems.³⁶⁵ He said that these themes “have served, in every generation, to prevent the church from coming to grips with the deepest issues of social justice.”³⁶⁶ He noted that revival preaching in the Second Great Awakening “linked individual salvation, free will, and moralism to the question of how the Christian should fight social evil,” and said,

... that connection has continued, almost undisturbed, to the present. Because of its basic orientation to the belief that great social problems are solved by converting individuals, it has successfully blunted the edge of any realistic analysis of social problems and any effective strategy of church action.³⁶⁷

In addition to criticizing this characteristic Billy Graham stance, Wilmore’s analysis also fit into a critique of a particular version of individualistic evangelicalism which had been a feature of white southern religion, especially among Presbyterians, since the antebellum period. This doctrine, known as the “spirituality of the church,” maintained divisions between the sacred and secular, and opposed church involvement in political issues, especially with regard to social justice.³⁶⁸ It allowed the church “no official involvement in the social reform of the state,” preferring the church’s acquiescence to culture and focus on preparation “for the world to come,” and leaving “all things that regard this present life” to the civil government.³⁶⁹ Antebellum southern Presbyterian clergy like Benjamin Morgan Palmer and James Henley Thornwell created this idea, describing the church as “‘exclusively a spiritual organization’ having ‘no mission to

care for the things, or to become entangled with the kingdoms and policy, of this world.”³⁷⁰

Presbyterians “applied the doctrine inconsistently,” because it served merely as a way for the church to avoid having to address social injustice in the form of slavery.³⁷¹

The doctrine of the “spirituality of the church” caused many southern white Presbyterians to remain silent during the Civil Rights Movement.³⁷² Segregationists, including Billy Graham’s father-in-law, North Carolina Presbyterian L. Nelson Bell, used this doctrine to criticize his denomination, the PC (US), for its backing of Civil Rights.³⁷³ At the time Gayraud Wilmore was completing the final revisions of *Secular Relevance*, this doctrine had come under a sustained attack by moderate southern white Presbyterians, most publicly in a 1961 commencement address at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, delivered by professor, minister, and journalist Ernest Trice Thompson. Thompson condemned it as the only “distinctive view of our [southern white Presbyterian] church,” and said that in it, such Presbyterians had “totally abandoned their Calvinistic heritage.”³⁷⁴ He claimed social responsibility as essential to “our Calvinistic, and also our Christian, heritage” and “our true spiritual mission.”³⁷⁵ Charlotte, North Carolina pastor and future denominational moderator J. Randolph Taylor agreed, and would later put it this way: “if you’re going to be a Christian, you’ve got to be a Christian not only in private life but in public life as well.”³⁷⁶

While not a Presbyterian, Martin Luther King, Jr. also lambasted the doctrine of the “spirituality of the church,” which he, like Gayraud Wilmore, observed in southern white evangelicalism as a whole. He criticized “white churches [which] stand on the sidelines and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities.”³⁷⁷ He recalled hearing “many ministers” question church involvement in racial and economic issues, saying, “those are social

issues with which the gospel has no real concern.”³⁷⁸ He criticized churches that “commit themselves to a completely otherworldly religion which made a strange distinction between body and soul, the sacred and the secular.”³⁷⁹

Wilmore noted the admirable efforts of reformers within white evangelicalism like Walter Rauschenbusch, but said, “the social gospel, for all its pragmatism, was never quite free of ‘ethical revivalism,’ which really had to do with saving souls. This pious reformism always threatened to frustrate a realistic approach to social action.”³⁸⁰ Wilmore contrasted the “revivalistic social concern” of Rauschenbusch with “the ‘mature’ social gospel,” saying that “Rauschenbusch himself believed that the revivalistic orthodoxy... was not wholly incompatible with his own views.”³⁸¹ He noted that Rauschenbusch himself expressed “sympathy... with the conservative instinct which shrinks from giving up any of the dear possessions which have made life holy for us,” taking “comfort” that “the changes required to make room for the social gospel are not destructive but constructive.”³⁸² While Kenneth “Snuffy” Smith had also preferred the more “mature” and “realistic” approach of Niebuhr’s Christian Realism in his debates with Martin Luther King, Jr., Smith had criticized Rauschenbusch’s social gospel for its excessive optimism. Wilmore likely shared that view, but this critique of the pioneering social gospel theologian was not about optimism, rather it served to point out how Rauschenbusch’s evangelical revivalism limited his advocacy for Christian social action.

Of Rauschenbusch’s “changes required to make room for the social gospel,” Wilmore said,

It is questionable, however, whether those changes were ever brought about and whether room was actually made for a Protestantism that could attack the problems of society with effect. Liberal Protestantism and the social gospel brought an enlarged vision to the

American churches, but its close connections with the mixture of conservatism and Pelagianism of the revivalists prevented its deepest implications from ever really becoming an alternative to what was already assumed to be “social Christianity” by the American church public.³⁸³

Wilmore wrote that a few social gossellers left the church to pursue social action through socialism and trade unionism, realizing that the social gospel “demanded a radical new social and political ethos for the church.”³⁸⁴ In their view, the church was not changing fast enough. “It could not bring an authentic reconstruction of the social order, nor a new relationship between the church and American culture.”³⁸⁵ Wilmore argued that “non-political, social welfare Protestantism, devoid of any scientific social analysis or much interest in social action, has persisted in the churches,” and that “as the suburban, middle-class mentality, with its commitment to peace, piety, and prosperity, becomes almost standard for most churchmen in the United States, this kind of Protestantism may well have increased” until today.³⁸⁶ He noted that Protestants had been able to work effectively against alcohol, but “action on many other less obvious issues, upon which church pronouncements are made, has continued to be individualistic, oriented to ‘attitudinal change,’ sentimental, and crusading.”³⁸⁷

Wilmore highlighted the failures of the social gospel and Christian Realism to meaningfully re-direct the church away from its revival-derived individualism.

Intelligence in political analysis, the sense of a relationship between... “troubles” and “issues,” sensitivity to the realities of power, acceptance of controversy as normative for democratic action, and recognition of the necessity of corporate action - all these, and other elements introduced by the early writings of Reinhold Niebuhr and other social ethicists, are missing in most American Protestant churches today. It is as if the best of the social gospel movement and the ethical realism of neo-orthodoxy had never happened.

It is unclear whether Wilmore was pointing out flaws in “the social gospel movement and the ethical realism of neo-orthodoxy,” or merely expressing his wish that more people were better acquainted with such movements. However, as will be discussed later in this chapter, Wilmore was part of a group of intellectuals struggling with how to respond to the failure of such movements to effect, in particular, racial justice. He continued, again criticizing Billy Graham’s soul-saving social action strategy, and this time identifying the evangelist by name.

Instead of these correctives to theological conservatism we hear emphases and points of view intimately connected to the themes of revivalism from Finney to Graham - moralism and piecemeal reform in temperance, gambling, Sabbath observance, and relations with the Vatican. Ministers and laymen seem hesitant to speak frankly of such basic realities as class stratification, racial discrimination, the fact of power politics and economic determinism. We hear also the refusal to acknowledge that changes in social structure which remove certain barriers to justice and brotherhood may have to precede individual conversions. This is the general tenor of Protestant discussion about social problems, especially at the local church level, if such problems are discussed at all. Some progress toward relevant social analysis and action has undoubtedly been made, but it is difficult to see that most of American Protestantism has moved very far from the ethical revivalism of the last century.³⁸⁸

Wilmore noted that sometimes foci on “personal salvation and individuality” have helped, in terms of charity work, especially among evangelical urban missions like that of the Salvation Army and “the many downtown ‘rescue missions’ headed by fundamentalist Bible institute graduates.”³⁸⁹ Having worked in a mainline ministry among agricultural migrants, Wilmore admitted that these evangelical missions among the “underprivileged masses” were a kind of ministry which

...has its own unique significance and it often attracts interest and support from secularists who are more impressed by the soup line in the inner city than by the more sophisticated mission work of the main-line denominations among Indians and agricultural migrants.³⁹⁰

Wilmore pointed out that Pentecostal and Holiness churches were often racially integrated, but uninvolved in social action.³⁹¹ Despite the effectiveness of some individualistic evangelical charity work, and the ways in which evangelicals often outdid mainline churches in mission work, the “personal salvation-individualistic morality approach” was, in Wilmore, ’s view, insufficient.³⁹²

The Salvation Army does the work of the good Samaritan in the urban areas while the other denominations ride by on the new expressways in their station wagons. But soup, crackers, and a dormitory bed if you will listen to an evangelistic sermon is no substitute for social legislation and direct pressure on city authorities to do something about the problem of homeless men.³⁹³

Wilmore also pointed out that the increasing pluralism and secularism of the modern West, as highlighted by his professor, Will Herberg, in his seminal 1955 *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, meant that Christians had to change their strategies for influencing public affairs, as they could no longer merely resort to “an appeal to traditional morality and the gospel of individual salvation.”³⁹⁴

Also echoing Herberg’s critique of Americans’ greater devotion to an “American Way of Life” than to their particular religious commitments, Wilmore said,

The times are changing. There is today an ever-widening chasm between the mountaintop experiences of eleven o’clock Sunday morning and the rest of the hours of the week in the workaday world. The hymns and prayers wafting from the half-empty inner-city churches are all but drowned out by the noise of the “exploding metropolis” and the thunder of the industrial machine.... But... the exhortations to love our depersonalized neighbors and live with quiet assurance about the radioactive future and a “heaven” whose traditional geography has been penetrated by rockets and astronauts are all being crudely heckled by the hard realities of the world in which we live.³⁹⁵

Wilmore criticized materialism and consumption.³⁹⁶ He wrote that Protestantism had been unsuccessful in transforming culture, and that,

What we view today is not the expression of authentic Protestantism in its cultural vocation. When we have the courage to be honest about it we must grant that it looks much more like a quiet, genteel Protestantism in cultural decay.³⁹⁷

Protestantism had been successful at being “*in* the world” but not in transforming the world or in being intentional about “*how* the church should be in the world.”³⁹⁸ Wilmore asserted, “Today the church is in the world - but much as a parenthesis is in a sentence and could quite easily be deleted without great effect,” “it is not integral with the culture - certainly not in the way that government and business are integral.”³⁹⁹ Most churches “are class churches that reflect only the sentimentalized, ‘spiritual’ aspects of community life. They mind their own spiritual business....”⁴⁰⁰ They “have no intention of making... a declaration of independence from this comfortable relationship.”⁴⁰¹ He argued that “Church social action committees still deal with community problems with the assumption that if only the attitudes and hearts of their neighbors could be changed, their neighbors’ practices would automatically conform to the ideals of justice and brotherhood.”⁴⁰² In a line which drew on the origins of McDowell Presbyterian, the Church of the Master, and St. Augustine Presbyterian, he said, “We work for years to build great urban churches only to see our parishes disintegrate in panic when Southern mountaineers, negroes, and Puerto Ricans move into the neighborhoods that were thought to be so dedicated to democracy and brotherhood.”⁴⁰³ To sum up the first chapter, Wilmore described a “treadmill of deception.”⁴⁰⁴

And so we Protestant churchmen work hard, but we are on a treadmill. We are sincere, sacrificing, generous..., loyal..., but... without really understanding what is going on.... We are, in fact, caught in a cultural trap which, in terms of its tyranny over our essential humanity, its defection from the deepest sources of the Judaeo-Christian heritage, its almost irresistible [sic] determination of our thoughts and actions, has all the characteristics of that which the [New Testament] knows as the demonic. There is nothing left for us but to fight our way out.⁴⁰⁵

As previously noted, the final two sentences of this passage repeated, almost verbatim, a passage from Wilmore's April 1958 *Social Progress* article, "Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe," again revealing that Wilmore had been working throughout the SEA years to develop the ideas which would become this book.⁴⁰⁶

Wilmore's critique of moral suasion as a strategy for church social action, especially on racial issues, recalled his doctoral mentor George Kelsey's 1948 call for Christians to move beyond mere words, defending the need for protest as a part of the Christian imperative to "restrain evil" in a sinful world which is not yet fully redeemed, and advocating seeking justice through electoral politics and the passage of legislation.⁴⁰⁷ Wilmore's critique also recalled Howard Thurman, who in 1943 suggested that Christians go even beyond such formal political channels, expressing a need for "devising techniques" including but also going beyond "moral suasion" towards "some form of shock" or "noncooperation" designed to break people out of their entrenched "alignments."⁴⁰⁸

What these African American intellectuals, along with others like Benjamin Mays and William Stuart Nelson, had theorized about in the 1940s, and what Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, and the Wilmore brothers had practiced in that same decade - nonviolent direct action - still remained a strange, unfamiliar idea to most Christians, especially white Presbyterians. This was true even as Rustin, Ella Baker, John Lewis, and Martin Luther King, Jr. were beginning to turn these methods into a massive national movement. Wilmore's reference to the question of whether the church could influence this struggle "in a revolutionary world" drew on his engagements with communism and socialism through the Young Communist League and Christian Action, on his interactions with Palestinian refugees in 1958, and on his awareness of the increasing

successes of African independence movements, beginning with Ghana under Kwame Nkrumah's leadership in 1957, and rapidly increasing in the year 1960.

Much of what Wilmore was dealing with in this first chapter was, like the work of Kelsey, Mays, Thurman, Nelson, Niebuhr, and John Bennett, a question of how to reform (or replace) the social gospel into a new theory or praxis which could be more effective in the actual production of social, and especially racial justice. How can we change theology to change society? While Wilmore and others received a partial answer to this question in the early 1960s' use of nonviolent direct action by leaders like King, Wilmore would not discover what, for him, was a fully satisfying answer until the rise of Black Power and Black Theology in the late 1960s. In fact, Wilmore himself was a direct personal and theological link between the African American social gospel and Christian Realism of Kelsey, Niebuhr, and Bennett (in conversation with the pacifism and nonviolent direct action of Rustin), and the Black Power and Black Theology of James Cone and the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC). While Kelsey, Niebuhr, and Bennett may not have taken much notice of Wilmore, he was certainly one of their disciples, and there was no leader more significant than Wilmore in laying the groundwork for the Christian strain of Black Power, in anticipation of James Cone.

In Chapter 2, "Spurious Secularism and True Secularity," Wilmore explained that it was not atheistic secularism which threatened the church. Instead, the real threat was the secularism of consumer culture and conformity - the church was too close to the culture. "Such a secularism uses the church for its own purposes, and... can believe that 'religion is a good thing' as long as it is favorable to the *status quo*."⁴⁰⁹

The real threat to the church and the relevance of its gospel to the world are the Christmas carols from November to January ringing down the shopper-filled streets, the Easter merchandising madness, the annual sally in the Congress to insert the name of Jesus Christ somewhere in the Constitution, the film versions of Biblical heroes who act like American suburbanites, the “Jesus Saves” billboards sponsored by an American Legion Post which is also persecuting the town librarian over “Red books for our children,” the “Go to Church” posters with their customary portrayal of well-scrubbed, enrapt, prosperous looking middle-class families - the one hundred and one day-by-day subtle erasures of the line between the church and the local country club, between Americanism and Christianity.⁴¹⁰

Such examples rendered the church’s highest allegiance as not to God, but to a certain kind of conformist, commercialist, middle-class, anti-communist, WASP-y American culture.

Wilmore argued that it was appropriate for “the different spheres of human life” to have “autonomy,” as advocated by secularists.⁴¹¹ He suggested that churches embrace a “new secularity” or “holy worldliness,” as a way of being worldly, but not in the sense of making themselves “uncritically acceptable to the culture on its own terms.”⁴¹²

Wherein lies the true secularity of the church? It is in believing and acting out realistically the message that Jesus Christ is not only the Lord of the church but is also the Lord of General Motors and the Democratic Party and is working quite outside the church as such, to fulfill the reconciliation of the world.⁴¹³

In other words, the church should not uncritically conform to the world, rather it should engage with the world with the realization that the world is God’s creation, and, in keeping with Reformed theology, that God is “sovereign” over not just the church but also the world, loving, caring for, and judging all of creation. There is “a chosen secularity, a holy worldliness that aids and abets an authentic secularism,” which is “a humanistic idealism based upon reason and a universalistic ethic.”⁴¹⁴ The church, when it practices such “holy secularity,” “fights against the spurious secularism which is nothing more than America’s soul-saving, moralistic ‘religion-in-general.’”⁴¹⁵ Wilmore’s “true secularity of the church” was an answer to the doctrine of the

“spirituality of the church.” While the latter held that the church should only concern itself with internal, spiritual, non-political issues, the former held the view, more in line with the Calvinistic Reformed tradition at large, that God’s sovereignty over all creation meant that the church, like God, should care about issues outside of its walls.

For Wilmore, “authentic secularism,” which he admitted was “singularly unpopular in religious America these days,” was “critical of the church... because of its retreat from the struggle for freedom and justice, its fear of the truth whenever the truth does not correspond to its creed, its loss of the sense of the beauty and terror of natural life.”⁴¹⁶ Here Wilmore used “secularity” not in the sense of the church’s engagement with the world, or of the world’s “spurious” mis-use of the church, but rather in the sense of those wary of the church because of the church’s failure to, among other things, seek social justice. Such persons “often misunderstand and distort the meaning of the faith, but despite themselves, some of these people are caught up in and used by the action of God for reconciliation.”⁴¹⁷ In fact, Wilmore noted the “amazing congruence” between many such persons and “prophetic Christianity,” taking as his examples Albert Camus, the Beatniks, and some Marxists.⁴¹⁸

Even in Marxist circles, as distant as they are from a sympathetic view of Christianity, one can sometimes find the overtones of the deep humanity and openness toward the transcendent that clears the way for the gospel, preparing the ground for the seed, the silent growth, and finally the fruit of the Kingdom.⁴¹⁹

Several years later, Wilmore would return to this comparison between those advocates for justice who stand outside the church, including Marxists, and prophetic Christianity. Wilmore also connected these sentiments with contemporaneous events in the Civil Rights Movement.

... despite the early influence of Christian pacifism and nonviolence, many of the leaders of the student sit-ins, the main leadership of the Congress of Racial Equality and other

movements for racial justice in the United States, are secularists who have been and are today most critical of the church and the social effects of religion. . . . What has been accomplished in this country and abroad in the field of race relations represents, to a large degree, what is the most significant phenomenon of our generation - an *entente cordiale* between a realistic and militant Christianity and an authentic secularism.⁴²⁰

The “secularity of the church” was a basis for the church to engage with the Civil Rights Movement, without either leaving its religious identity behind, or seeking to convert secular activists.

In yet another use of militaristic imagery, Wilmore argued that the “spurious secularism” of an uncritical alliance between church and culture had provided the church with its “fighting situation,” a situation which “calls the church to make alliances with strange comrades-in-arms in a war against secularism in behalf of a deeper secularity,” “to undertake the hard and human work of building a society of free men on the craggy shores of reality, pummeled by the limitless ocean of eternity and swept by the winds of God.”⁴²¹ The church should ally itself not with those who affirm the superficial trappings of Christianity while upholding the unjust social *status quo*, but with the people “from the most unexpected places” who reject those superficial trappings while sharing the actual social justice mission of the church.⁴²²

Chapter 3, “The Faithful Use of Power,” continued the discussion, touched on in Chapter 1 and reflected in the articles of *Social Progress*, of how the church ought to seek and exercise its power, so as neither to dominate nor to abandon the political sphere. The church must not simply seek to convert individuals, but must also engage in “corporate” or “united action on certain issues of public concern.”⁴²³ He cautioned that “this is no invitation to power-hungry church executives to join in an amoral play of power politics within the churches,” for “we must be aware of our pretensions and of the temptations to infallibility.”⁴²⁴ It “does not mean bidding for

sovereignty over the structures and institutions of society.”⁴²⁵ However, the mission of the church in today’s world is a serious business.”⁴²⁶

It demands savvy, skill, and faithfulness to use power in such a way as to rout the wolves without killing the sheep. The church will not save the world. But if it has any message for modern man, if it has any place for him to stand and fight against the demoralizing and tyrannizing structures of a culture that has been severed from its true secular responsibility to serve human need, then those Christians who know this must speak and act. They cannot falter before the hard decision to employ responsibly the power and prestige of the church to help it become the catalyst by which the culture can fulfill its obligation for the humanization of the life of man.⁴²⁷

The church must engage in politics on behalf of “human need,” making sure to use its power “responsibly,” but also unwaveringly. “The faithful use of power” means “energizing” the institutions of society, “within their own provinces and with the spirit appropriate to their own function, so that they can act as the true creatures of God they are.”⁴²⁸ Such power is God’s “gift to the church” so that, “with a due sense of humility,” “it may be used faithfully to the glory of God.”⁴²⁹

In the fourth and final chapter, “The Equipment of the Saints,” Wilmore turned to an examination of strategy for Christian social action, not at the national, denominational level, but at the level of the local congregation - how best to “equip the saints” of the local church for such work.⁴³⁰ In this chapter, Wilmore advanced an argument for a small group within the church, a “hard core” or a “remnant,” to engage in a special mission of social action.⁴³¹ This was not a criticism of those church members who might be a part of the “soft periphery” of the church, who Wilmore recognized were “also the church.”⁴³² He wrote,

The time may be ripe for a movement within the church today, not in the direction of past reforms and revivals that proposed to make the church less secular, but a movement of those ministers and laymen who would have the church become radically secular in terms of its mission to the world.⁴³³

In other words, such a specialized group should not try to make the church more “pure” or isolated from the world, rather, it should lead the church into a profound new relationship with the world. He cited similar proposals for such a group by Martin Marty, Gibson Winter, and Peter Berger.⁴³⁴ At first, he used a transportation metaphor to illustrate his point.

The church is like a huge moving van lumbering down a narrow road. A U turn, even if it were desirable, is not possible without jackknifing. The only way to turn around or to move in a different direction is to take one of the secondary roads to the right or to the left. In either case, those roads must be reconnoitered. Someone must know what problems of maneuvering and what obstacles lie along the way. That task belongs to a small group of motorcycles who will not only have the courage to probe unknown routes but will be bold enough to take over the wheel and steer in a new direction.⁴³⁵

Despite the vividness of this illustration, Wilmore soon abandoned it and moved on to one which had deeper meaning for him, and to which he would return again in the future: the militaristic image of small groups of church people who serve in a “reconnaissance and intelligence force.”⁴³⁶

Wilmore had written on this theme as early as November 1956, in a *Social Progress* article, ostensibly by the SEA staff, entitled “Social Strategy for the Local Church,” in which he had called for a “local church committee on social education” to pursue a mission of “reconnaissance and co-ordination.”⁴³⁷ As noted in Chapter 1, Wilmore’s use of such militaristic language drew on his actual combat experience. In fact, while Wilmore served as a radio operator during the war, he had wanted to serve in military intelligence instead.⁴³⁸ In this final chapter of *Secular Relevance*, Wilmore wrote,

Any congregation that is committed to Christian action in its community needs to have at its center or very close to it, a group of men and women prepared to be - to use military language - the reconnaissance and intelligence force of the main body.⁴³⁹

This group “must welcome all who would join it,” but it “is not a task that everyone in the congregation will be willing or able to do.”⁴⁴⁰ Such a group “must be conscious of its own integrity and maintain its own disciplined life and service.”⁴⁴¹ Many of those called to this work will come from among the “people in the pews every Sunday.”⁴⁴² However, some of those called might “have little concern for the church as a ‘religious enterprise.’”⁴⁴³ They might have become “estranged from the church,” “disillusioned by its spooky irrelevance to the real world,” but such a venture might allow them to “join in new frontiers of service in the name of Jesus Christ.”⁴⁴⁴

Such a group should receive some training. However, as a reconnaissance mission, much of the “intelligence” or information it hoped to learn could only be “developed in the field... , and in the little skirmishes that every good reconnaissance group sooner or later runs into,” for “news should be made, not simply reviewed by the church.”⁴⁴⁵ This was something of an action-reflection model - Wilmore wanted church members to go out and get their hands dirty in the work of social action, and then review their activities afterward to see what they had learned, in the service of ongoing mission. Indeed, he said this more directly: “There is a necessary rhythm of formal study and ‘action research’ that together comprise the training program of the core group and may hopefully spill over into the congregation in the form of conferences and forums.”⁴⁴⁶

Wilmore also used the concept of “deployment” as a companion to that of “a reconnaissance and intelligence group.”⁴⁴⁷ Deployment is a “deliberate” “decision of the core group to maintain, through one or more of its members, an outpost in some sector of the community that is the objective of corporate action.”⁴⁴⁸ Deployment is “the strategic infiltration of areas of need and centers of decision-making in the community for the purpose of mission.” In

other words, deployment occurs when the core church social action group sends its members in an intentional, targeted form of reconnaissance, into certain areas, rather than haphazardly sending them out into the world to discover what might need to be done. Wilmore gave the examples of the Christian action goals “to desegregate a community swimming pool or to begin Bible study among doctors in the Medical Center,” goals which require “some technical information, some ‘inside’ contacts, some deployment of a core group which opens the way for the congregation to achieve its ends.”⁴⁴⁹

A reconnaissance and intelligence group, to recall our military analogy, does not deploy itself for carrying out private surveillance of the enemy or engaging in little individual wars here and there. It operates by an agreed-upon plan of scouting the terrain immediately before the main body and reporting back in order that the combat team might move forward and secure the next objective.⁴⁵⁰

This group, therefore, must not confuse itself with the main body - church or army - and take the fight to the enemy on its own. Rather, it serves as an auxiliary of the main body, charged with the special duty of helping the main body prepare for the task at hand.

Wilmore provided other examples, one of a seminary student who had participated in negotiations between labor and management, one of “a few white ministers... [who] have, in a sense, worked ‘behind the lines’ of the segregationists to help undermine their effectiveness” in the South, some of them having “spoken out in conferences with officials or white citizens councils and lost their churches and very nearly their lives.”⁴⁵¹ Other examples included “a core group of Negro ministers in Philadelphia” who “organized an effective boycott” to force several local companies to “end hiring discrimination,” and a group credited as critical “in the defeat of the incumbent mayor in the 1961 [Detroit] city election.”⁴⁵² Wilmore noted that there were few churches engaging in this kind of model, but that their witness was powerful.

These fighting churches, led by a core of trained and committed laymen and a few young ministers trained in the period of neo-orthodox social ethics and the historic decision of the Supreme Court against racial segregation, are forging a style of Christian action that has not been seen since the days of [Walter] Rauschenbusch and [Washington] Gladden - and with a deeper awareness of the holy secularity of the church.⁴⁵³

In order to join in these efforts, according to Wilmore, churches must be proactive. Such mission,

...requires a group of people, an intelligence and reconnaissance vanguard, that will also provoke a fire fight when it is strategic. It needs laymen who are called by God for that purpose, trained with all the wisdom and sophistication experience can give, and who are willing to take the risks of using the forms of power available to them to do the works of love.⁴⁵⁴

He noted the church's appropriate wariness of "prophets who believe that God has revealed to them the course it should take and want to assume control for its execution."⁴⁵⁵ However, he asserted, "if there are prophets among us who... are ready to lead the church to obedience - let them speak and let us follow them as long as their prophecy is validated" by the good it does for the community.⁴⁵⁶ Wilmore closed by saying that while God has not called everyone to this particular kind of ministry,

... it may be assumed that he is calling others to a radical new relationship to the world. A relationship characterized by reconnoitering the frontiers of the secular where, both in the name of the church and outside of it, the gospel can be declared in new ways and with a new display of its power to build and transform, to plant and to uproot, to burn and heal.⁴⁵⁷

Over the course of the preceding twelve years, since he had sought, with some success, to export the racial justice activism of "Operation Oxford" to the community of West Chester, Pennsylvania, Gayraud Wilmore had learned that such activism was not for everyone. He had learned the difficulties of trying to stimulate an entire congregation to such activism, especially when its black members' employment lay in white hands. He had learned that even ministers' abilities to seek social action were limited, when they, too, found that their meager salaries were

in the hands of the white power structure. Perhaps a new form of organization was needed, a specialized church social action reconnaissance force, which could do what a congregation and its lone minister could not.

Like Niebuhr, Bennett, Kelsey, Thurman, Rustin, King, and others, Gayraud Wilmore was struggling with how to reform or replace the old social gospel theologies and strategies, ideas which had proven helpful in fighting economic injustice but had born little fruit in the field of racial justice. While others drew on different sources, including pacifism and Gandhian nonviolence, Wilmore drew on his own experiences of violent military combat. He did not advocate the literal use of such violence in the present struggle, but he did demonstrate that, in that Italian foxhole, he had received both a calling from God to ministry, and some ideas about the strategy he would use to empower such a ministry. While he recognized that the calling to strap on a “bandolier” and join in this church social action “reconnaissance” mission was not for everyone, it was indeed his own calling. One year after the publication of *Secular Relevance*, Wilmore would receive this new mission, to lead an organization which, as he later wrote, would act as the racial justice “reconnaissance and intelligence force” for an entire mainline denomination.⁴⁵⁸ This denomination happened to be one the largest, wealthiest, and most influential American religious institutions in that era. This new mission would involve several major “fire fights,” chief among them the crises surrounding James Forman and the Black Manifesto, and the legal defense of Angela Davis.⁴⁵⁹

¹ “So Segregation ‘IS’ Lawful in Penna.: ‘No Indictment’ Says Grand Jury: NAACP Assessed \$30.00 Court Charges.”

² Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, August 19, 1949, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. Barber informed Wilmore that he had been appointed as a Teaching Fellow in New Testament Greek for both semesters of the 1949-50 academic year.

³ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 8, 1951, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

⁴ Barber offered to pitch Wilmore to the church as its temporary pastor. Wilmore accepted Barber’s offer, and Barber followed through by having “a nice chat with the members of the Pulpit Committee, where I ‘sold’ you to them without apology,” securing an opportunity for Wilmore to preach a trial/interview sermon at the church a few weeks later, on September 25, 1949. Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, August 19, 1949; Gayraud S. Wilmore, letter to Jesse Belmont Barber, August 23, 1949; Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, August 30, 1949; T. S. [sic] Wilmore, Western Union Telegram to Dean Jesse Belmont Barber, Bethlehem, Penna., September 13, 1949. All of the above in Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

Andrew Murray joined the Presbytery of Chester at the same meeting at which Wilmore was appointed temporary pastor at Second Presbyterian. The chairman of the Committee on Pastoral Relations, Robert B. Boell, made the motion, at the request of Second Presbyterian, to have Wilmore occupy its pulpit as “student supply.” Minutes, “September Stated Meeting - 1949 - Devon, Penna.,” pp. 329-330, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester, Vol. 10, Chester. Presbytery. (Pres. Ch. in the U.S.A.) Minutes & records, 1943-1958, VAULT BX 8958.C47 A3, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁵ “The moderator [Rankin] stated that he had discussed with Mr. Gayraud S. Wilmore Jr., now nearing the end of his seminary work at Lincoln University, the possibility of accepting a call to the pastorate of our church. He stated that Mr. Wilmore had said that he would consider such a call after his graduation, and when the board retires Rev. Rankin, the present pastor, in September of this year.” Session meeting on May 6, 1949, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁶ McDowell’s session recommended that the church accept Rankin’s resignation on October 30, 1949, effective March 26, 1950. On November 27, 1949, Rankin announced that Wilmore “has expressed his desire to be ordained at McDowell some time during the winter or spring,” after which “the session expressed hearty approval and welcomed the opportunity to render any assistance necessary.” At the January 18, 1950 session meeting, Rankin announced that Wilmore “will be licensed by the Philadelphia Presbytery on next Tuesday Jan [empty space] 1950,” which, based on the session meeting’s date, must have been Tuesday, January 24, 1950. Session meetings on October 30, 1949, November 27, 1949, and January 18, 1950, *Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa.*, Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950 (Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America), Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁷ Jesse Belmont Barber participated in the ordination service, as did Ulysses S. Blakely. “Rev. G. S. Wilmore, Jr. To Be Ordained Tonight,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1950, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester”; Untitled news clipping, *Coatesville Record*, July 1, 1950, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder, Chester County Historical Society; Minutes, June 12, 1950, p. 49, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*, Chester. Presbytery. (Pres. Ch. in the U.S.A.) General Council. Minutes, 1945-1952, VAULT BX 8958.C47 A301 v. 2, Presbyterian Historical Society.

Gayraud Wilmore’s Lincoln student file also noted this pastorate under his post-graduation “employment record,” Lincoln student file for Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr.

⁹ “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester”; Untitled news clipping, *Coatesville Record*, July 1, 1950.

¹⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, letter to Jesse Belmont Barber, undated, Lincoln student file for Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. This letter enclosed reports in the *Daily Local News* of Wilmore’s sermons.

[Blank], Secretary to Jesse B. Barber, letter to the Reverend Gayraud S. Wilmore, November 6, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr.

“Dr. Barber has asked me to return this newspaper article to you at your request. Both Dr. Bond and Dr. Barber have read it and are very proud and grateful that they have such a staunch member of the Faith.”

¹¹ Barber enclosed five dollars with a letter “as a small token of our deep interest in your work on the occasion of your financial effort.” This contribution may have been to Wilmore’s church, rather than to him personally - “the occasion of your financial effort,” especially toward the end of the calendar year, might refer to a stewardship campaign. Jesse Belmont Barber, letter to the Reverend Gayraud S. Wilmore, November 15, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr.

¹² Andrew E. Murray and Jesse Belmont Barber were members of this presbytery, as were Horace Mann Bond and Samuel Govan Stevens. Minutes, “Pro Re Nata Meeting - May 27, 1951, Lincoln University, Pa.” p. 375, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester; Minutes, “Stated Meeting - September 25, 1951 - Upper Octorara Church, Parkesburg, Pa.,” p. 382, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

¹³ Emily Birnbaum, “John Lewis urges young activists to get into ‘good trouble’ to save democracy,” *The Hill*, June 5, 2018, accessed March 25, 2019, <https://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/390901-john-lewis-urges-young-activists-to-get-into-good-trouble-to-save-democracy>.

¹⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹⁶ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 16, 1950, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian - Second 1950-1954” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

¹⁷ Florence Sechler Miller, *A Legacy of Learning: The History of the West Chester Area Schools* (West Chester, Pennsylvania: West Chester Area School District, 1994), pp. 106-107.

¹⁸ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

¹⁹ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

²⁰ John D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*, New York: Free Press, 2003, p. 14.

²¹ D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 14.

²² D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 14.

²³ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 16, 1950.

²⁴ Durnell was either the first or second African American mail carrier for this Post Office. Warner R. Durnell, e-mail message to the author, March 29, 2019.

²⁵ He also “had far more experience and formal education than his white peers who were promoted to Branch Post Master,” but he was “overlooked.” Durnell was offered a Branch Post Master job “late in his career, near his retirement,” but by that point he “was not longer interested... didn’t want the headache at that point.” Durnell, e-mail message to the author, March 29, 2019.

The Rev. Warner Robert Durnell is the son of Warner A. Durnell. The West Chester Durnells were members of the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church, but Warner R. Durnell became Presbyterian after exposure to the denomination as a student at Lincoln University, and later became a prominent Presbyterian minister and presbytery and synod executive. Warner R. Durnell, e-mail message to the author, September 16, 2017; Warner R. Durnell, “Statement of Faith,” accessed August 9, 2019, <http://www.presbytery-mid-tennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/statement-of-faith-and-journey-of-faith-warner-durnell.pdf>; “African American Executives in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Warner Robert Durnell,” *Periscope 4: African American Presbyterians - Living into the 21st Century: Breakthroughs and Challenges, 197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004*, Racial Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004, pp. 49-50.

²⁶ Carl Ellis Durnell, Jr. may have even been the first African American police officer in Chester County. Durnell, e-mail message to the author, March 29, 2019.

“Miss Della Stonewell” (correctly spelled “Stonewall”) later became Della Virginia Stonewall Durnell, upon marrying Carl Durnell. Della ran a local beauty shop for forty years. “Della Virginia Stonewall Durnell, March 23, 1929-May 10, 2013,” DeBaptiste Funeral Homes, Inc. - West Chester, May 2013, accessed August 9, 2019, <https://www.debaptiste.com/obituary/6299594>.

²⁷ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 16, 1950.

²⁸ The “Youth Forums” continued, and were not always political or explicitly anti-segregation. A March 1950 forum, also at Second Presbyterian, discussed marriage, courtship, dating, and sex. While several people spoke at the gathering, this time the news article did mention Gayraud. “Walter Hundley, moderator from Lincoln University, and the Rev. G. S. Wilmore, pastor, made summary statements pointing up Christian attitudes involved in courtship and marriage.” “Mr. Wilmore will continue as the group’s advisor.” Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), March 20, 1950, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian - Second 1950-1954” folder, Chester County Historical Society. That semester, Walter Hundley was serving as managing editor of *The Lincolnian* and on the university’s “Religious Activities Committee” with Wilmore, Horace Mann Bond, Jesse Belmont Barber, David Swift, and Walter Fales. “Go to Church During Religious Emphasis Week.”

²⁹ Another incident in which Wilmore seems to have invited or at least accepted the presence of a guest speaker with anti-segregation overtones was a March 26, 1950 memorial service at Second Presbyterian, at which the state president of the Negro Women’s Federation, Mrs. Alexander Robinson of Pittsburgh, was guest speaker, on the topic of “Frederick Douglass.” Robinson was hosted at the local home of the organization’s Vice President, Mrs. Joseph R. Fugett. Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), March 25, 1950, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian - Second, 1950-1954” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

Fugett was the wife of the longtime principal, from 1920 to 1955, of the Gay Street School. Interestingly, Florence Sechler Miller has written, “Although he was not directly involved in the desegregation efforts of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Fugett helped pave the way by giving the black population the education and self-pride needed to stand up for their rights.” Whether he was “directly involved” or not, his wife was statewide Vice-President for the Negro Women’s Federation, and the Fugetts hosted this guest speaker in their home. Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 252.

³⁰ “Like most other Northern cities of the era West Chester was riven by ethnic and racial divisions. Massive immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe confronted native-born Anglo Americans with customs, languages, religious beliefs, and modes of dress that both seemed alien and stimulated fears of national decline. Nick Bruno, a child of Italian immigrants and a contemporary of Bayard, recalled how ‘we stayed more or less to ourselves, just like the blacks stayed to themselves, the Irish stayed to themselves, the Polaks [sic] or whatever. Jewish people stayed to themselves. We were all in the west end here. And the blacks were in the other section. The east section. Of course, the Quakers were all over.’” D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 12.

³¹ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 106.

³² Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 106.

³³ D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 12.

³⁴ D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 14.

³⁵ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

³⁶ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

³⁷ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 105. However, John D’Emilio has argued that at the elementary level, “black students benefited from a mostly black teaching staff who, in the words of Mary Frances Thomas, a classmate of Bayard [Rustin] in the 1920s, ‘knew what we were going to face, so they had us very well prepared... we were well-fortified.’” D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 13.

³⁸ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 105.

³⁹ D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

⁴¹ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 108.

⁴² Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 108.

⁴³ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 108.

⁴⁴ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 108.

⁴⁵ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 110.

⁴⁶ This policy of exceptions for white students continued until the 1955-56 year. White families still found ways to avoid Gay Street in that year, and the school was closed during the 1956-57 year for remodeling. Its students were moved to the now desegregated Biddle and High Street Schools, and Gay Street reopened in 1957 with a desegregated faculty and student body. Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, pp. 110-111.

⁴⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” Steve must have enrolled in first grade at High Street, because the borough did not offer kindergarten until 1951. Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 111.

⁴⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁴⁹ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950, “West Chester Public Schools: West Chester Boro School Board, Directors 1950” folder, Chester County Historical Society. “The minutes of May 15, 1950 and July 17, 1950 contained letters received from Rev. Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, a recognized leader in the black community.” Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109. Miller has identified these minutes as “West Chester Area School Board Minutes. 1875-1966. West Chester Area School District Archives.” Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 339.

⁵⁰ “The group was represented by Rev. Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, and William F. Brinton, of Sharpless street.” Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950.

⁵¹ Haverford’s 1932 yearbook included William Fisher Brinton, whose personal page as a member of the senior class identified him as a Quaker and a resident of 327 Sharpless Street in West Chester. It added, “...Billy is one of the truly creative artists on the campus. He is a leading exponent of the modernistic school of photography.” Elsewhere in the yearbook, Brinton was identified as the volume’s Photographic Manager. *The 1932 Record: Haverford College* (Haverford, Pennsylvania: The Senior Class of Haverford College, 1932), pp. 25, 86.

Here, William F. Brinton is identified as a Quaker (Friend), drafted from West Chester, who served two terms in Civilian Public Service as a conscientious objector in the 1940s, and whose “original occupation” was “Writer/Photographer.” The details about photography are necessary in linking this conscientious objector to the Haverford alumn and resident of Sharpless Street, and therefore, to Wilmore’s fellow activist. “CPS Worker 001084 - Brinton, William F,” *Living Peace in a Time of War: The Civilian Public Service Story*, The Mennonite Central Committee, 2015, accessed August 11, 2019, <http://civilianpublicservice.org/workers/1084>.

The Quaker writer, professor, and AFSC member Howard Haines Brinton was also a native of West Chester, and was co-director of the nearby “Pendle Hill” Quaker conference center from 1936 to 1952. Howard and William do not appear to have been close relatives.

⁵² Miller has presented these questions in the form of a bulleted list. Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109. The *Daily Local News* provided the list in the following form, with slightly different wording than that of Miller: “The group asked if (1) any parent can send his child to the school nearest his home; (2) practice teaching accommodations are open to anyone in the West Chester schools regardless of race, color, or religion; (3) teaching positions are open to anyone regardless of race, color, or creed.” Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950.

⁵³ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109. The *Daily Local News* merely reported that Slack, “speaking for all the board, answered all the questions in the affirmative.” Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950.

⁵⁴ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950.

⁵⁵ “The minutes of May 15, 1950 and July 17, 1950 contained letters received from Rev. Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, a recognized leader in the black community.” Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109.

⁵⁶ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109.

⁵⁷ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109.

⁵⁸ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 109.

⁵⁹ “But two years later - in the summer of 1951 - then Gay Street teacher Errol Anderson was approached by [school superintendent] Dr. [G. Arthur] Stetson about a transfer to the junior high school. Anderson, who accepted the transfer, became the first black teacher in the junior high.” Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, pp. 108-110.

⁶⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁶¹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁶² Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 116.

⁶³ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 116.

⁶⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

⁶⁵ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 106.

⁶⁶ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

⁶⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

⁶⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

⁶⁹ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

⁷⁰ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

⁷¹ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 107.

Ethel Young Closson was a teacher, “a primary figure in the desegregation of the Chadds Ford public schools,” and an officer in West Chester’s NAACP. “Ethel Young Closson, April 22, 2007,” DeBaptiste Funeral Homes, Inc. - West Chester, accessed August 11, 2019, http://www.debaptiste.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1559722.

She was also “a frequent presence at school board meetings when she saw something she believed was unjust.” “Ethel Closson of West Chester,” *Daily Local News*, April 26, 2007, accessed August 11, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46715209>.

Ethel Closson was already involved in Bahá’í by April 1950, as indicated by this advertisement for a Bahá’í panel discussion on education at which she was a speaker, therefore it seems unlikely that the Clossons were the family that left Wilmore’s church. “Baha’i World Faith,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 1, 1950, p. 4.

Leonard Sherwood Closson was also a teacher, area representative of the Bahá’í Faith of Pennsylvania, and involved in various civic organizations. “Leonard S. Closson Sr.,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1977, p. 5, accessed August 11, 2019, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/16932048/bahai_leonard_closson_obit/.

⁷² Wilmore interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017. In a 1981 interview, Wilmore said that “the church was growing” during that period. Wilmore’s memory was likely more accurate during the 1981 interview, and church growth would have matched national trends at the time. However, churches are often reluctant to acknowledge declining membership, so perhaps Wilmore’s 2017 statement was more accurate in this regard. Declining membership would also match the anecdotal evidence of the departure of a key family to the Bahá’í community, as well as Wilmore’s admitted inattention to his congregation in certain respects. Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁷³ “Pastor Calls for Action on Part of Church Today,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), July 16, 1951, “Presbyterian - Second 1950-1954” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

⁷⁴ “Pastor Calls for Action on Part of Church Today.”

⁷⁵ “Excerpts from Sunday’s Sermons: Second Presbyterian,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), August 21, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

⁷⁶ “Excerpts from Sunday’s Sermons: Second Presbyterian.”

⁷⁷ “Claptrap - A Study in Fascism.”

⁷⁸ Spann retired on May 15, 1949, effective June 30. Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1949, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

The bulletin from Wilmore’s installation service lists the exact tenures of all of Second Presbyterian’s former pastors. Spann was pastor there from October 16, 1923 until June 30, 1949. “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester.”

Sources sometimes spell Spann’s first name as “McClain,” but usually as “McLain,” or else they avoid the question altogether using his initials, as “M. C. Spann.”

⁷⁹ “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester.”

Wilmore has identified McLain Spann’s daughter as the organist during Wilmore’s pastorate. It is unclear whether Wilmore was mixing up the former pastor’s daughter and wife, or whether both were organists, one for Wilmore’s installation and the other as the regular church organist during Wilmore’s pastorate.

Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

⁸⁰ “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester.”

The *Daily Local News* detailed Spann’s Sumter, South Carolina roots and prior service to South Carolina churches on the occasion of his visit to his home state in 1944. Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), September 7, 1944, “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

⁸¹ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1949; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 50, No. 1, January 1945, p. 8; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 51, No. 1, January 1946, *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1945-1946, Announcements for 1946-1947* (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University), p. 8, Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*; The Lincoln University Bulletin, Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947, p. 108.

Wilmore and Spann both participated, along with Jesse Belmont Barber, Samuel G. Stevens, and Andrew E. Murray, in the ordination of Maurice J. Moyer at Lincoln in 1952. “Seminarion Ordained.”

⁸² “Which is to say that I immediately got involved in shaping my pastorate around doing something about the segregated school system in West Chester. And I think paid less attention to the church than I might have, although, the church was growing, and I was enjoying my ministry, and doing some counseling, I was working on a masters of sacred theology at the time at Temple University’s School of Theology, but the major thrust of my ministry was a social action thrust....” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁸³ A December 1951 *Daily Local News* article referred to Wilmore as having completed his “S. T. M.” at Temple University, so he must have completed the degree in less than eighteen months following his seminary graduation. Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 8, 1951; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]”; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111.

⁸⁴ Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

⁸⁵ At the conclusion of Wilmore’s tenure at Second Presbyterian, Spann told Wilmore, “I didn’t agree with everything you said.” Wilmore responded, “I know you didn’t but I want to thank you for supporting me by coming to church,” where the Spanns sat on the front pew. According to Wilmore, the two men “parted as friends,” and there were “never any angry words between them.” Wilmore added, “But he was very conservative, and I tried to bring something different into the church.” Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

⁸⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” Wilmore mistakenly referred to his presbytery at the time as “the Presbytery of Donegal.” That presbytery, which encompassed churches in the western suburbs and exurbs of Philadelphia, was known at the time as the Presbytery of Chester, and would later be re-named the Presbytery of Donegal.

⁸⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

⁸⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

Wilmore also discussed this incident in a 2007 journal article, saying, “I, on the other hand, had only a brief three year period as an installed pastor in a small town in Pennsylvania, had been labeled a “communist troublemaker” by the pastor of the Westminster Church of West Chester, because of a disreputable movement I led to desegregate the elementary schools of West Chester, and was leery of white clergy who presumed to know more about black people than we knew about ourselves. After all, a fellow pastor had complained about me to Donegal Presbytery in 1951 and tried to get presbytery to cut its support of my salary as the pastor of a mission congregation.” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59.

⁸⁹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁰ Wilmore has addressed this issue on at least four occasions: in a 1981 interview with Oscar McCloud, in a 2007 article in the *Journal of Presbyterian History*, and in emails and an in-person interview with me in 2016-17. In each of those cases he referred to the pastor of Westminster Church, but in none of them did he refer to Robert B. Boell by name. When I asked him if the pastor’s name was “Boell,” he said, “I have problems with names and details, and never remembered the spelling of the pastor’s name. I think, however, that you have the right man. It should be easy to confirm who was the pastor of Westminster in West Chester in 1950.” Indeed, the “official history” of Westminster Church confirms that Boell was indeed its only pastor at the time - its first “assistant pastor” was hired in 1961. Jan Manos, *Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pennsylvania 1892-1992: Its History, Its People*, p. 52; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, September 15, 2017.

⁹¹ Under his leadership, church membership increased from 500 to 1,200, the church expanded and renovated its physical plant, and its receipts went from \$9,700 to \$90,000. Manos, *Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pennsylvania 1892-1992*, p. 52.

⁹² “Minutes of Session - June 12, 1950,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.,” *Session Book No. 3, Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pa.* (Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, West Chester, Pa. Westminster Pres. Church. Session minutes. V MI46 W522s v. 3 1945-1962.).

“Minutes of Session - February 11, 1952,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.” “Since the Second Presbyterian Church no longer has a full time pastor, a motion was passed that the contribution of ten dollars (\$10.00) a month from the benevolence treasury of this church to the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa. be discontinued immediately.”

See also, “Minutes of Session - March 15, 1953,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.” “A motion was passed that this church cooperate with the First and Second Presbyterian Churches of West Chester in sponsoring [sic] a concert by the Glee Club of Lincoln University for the benefit of the Second Presbyterian Church and that the use of this church for the concert be granted for May 7, 1953.”

⁹³ “Minutes of Session - June 11, 1951,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.”

⁹⁴ “A letter was read by the Clerk from Rev. Gayraud S. Wilmore expressing appreciation for the interest and financial contribution of this church to the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.”

“Minutes of Session - September 11, 1950,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.”

“A letter from Rev. Gayraud Wilmore stating that continued financial assistance is needed by the Second Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa. was read by Rev. Robert B. Boell. Action on this matter was taken at the June 11, 1951 meeting of the Session.” “Minutes of Session - October 8, 1951,” “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.”

⁹⁵ As of the meeting at which Wilmore entered the presbytery as temporary pastor, Boell concluded his term as the presbytery’s moderator. In his role as chairman of the Committee on Pastoral Relations, Boell made the motion, at the request of Second Presbyterian, to have Wilmore occupy its pulpit as “student supply.” Minutes, “September Stated Meeting - 1949 - Devon, Penna.,” pp. 328, 330, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

⁹⁶ “September Stated Meeting - 1949 - Devon, Penna.,” p. 330, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester; “The Installation of Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr. as pastor of The Second Presbyterian Church, Walnut Street between Miner and Barnard Streets, West Chester, Pennsylvania, by the Presbytery of Chester.”

⁹⁷ A list of agenda items in the “Report of the Committee on Pastoral Relations, the Rev. Robert B. Boell, chr.,” included the following: “(9) That Presbytery pay from National Missions money \$50.00 per month toward pastor’s salary to Mr. Wilmore as minister on supply Basis. Mr. Wilmore graduates from Lincoln Seminary in February.” Minutes, “January Stated Meeting - Jan. 24, 1950 - Paoli, Pa.,” Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

⁹⁸ “Stated Meeting, June 27, 1950 - Doe Run Church,” pp. 344-345, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester. Since the presbytery had been using BNM funds to supplement Wilmore’s salary prior to his installation as permanent pastor, it is possible that the additional \$1,000 was also from BNM funds. However, the language in the presbytery minutes simply implies that the additional funds came from the presbytery itself.

⁹⁹ “Stated Meeting, June 27, 1950 - Doe Run Church,” p. 347, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

¹⁰⁰ He was receiving \$1,400 as his base/official salary from Second Presbyterian, another \$1,000 from the Presbytery of Chester, and \$120 each from Westminster and First Presbyterian Churches in West Chester. \$2,640 in 1950-52 is the equivalent of approximately \$26,000-\$28,000 today.

¹⁰¹ Congregational meeting, January 15, 1952, “Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa.” \$5,000 in 1952 is the equivalent of approximately \$48,000 today.

¹⁰² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰³ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰⁴ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), February 19, 1952, “West Chester Public Schools: Directors 1951-1952” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

¹⁰⁵ Wilmore’s memory is not necessarily fully reliable in this case, for several reasons. First, his is a secondhand account, since he has acknowledged having been absent from the presbytery meeting in question, and having heard of Boell’s alleged defamation of him after the fact. Second, Wilmore’s ability in his most recent interviews to recall the details of the event is limited, as is evident in his lack of memory of Boell’s name except when prompted, and in his anachronistic references to the Presbytery of Chester as the “Presbytery of Donegal.” However, as noted in this narrative, documentary evidence does bear out some other aspects of Wilmore’s involvement in school desegregation in West Chester, as well as the contributions to his church by Westminster Church and by the Presbytery of Chester. Also, Wilmore described many of the details of these events, including the role of Westminster’s pastor, as early as the 1981 interview, quoted from above, in which he pointed out the McCarthyist context as well as the possibility that Boell may have heard about Wilmore’s YCL activities.

¹⁰⁶ The elder Boell left Westminster in 1965. Manos, *Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pennsylvania 1892-1992* pp. 52-53.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Doran “Bob” Young, e-mail message to the author, September 22, 2017. Young was responding in written form to the author’s brief summary of Wilmore’s account of the Wilmore-Boell conflict, delivered during a telephone conversation on September 20, 2017, and to an email from the author stating that Wilmore “was involved in an effort to desegregate local schools, and I have heard that he had some conflict with the Rev. Robert Boell of Westminster.” The author, e-mail message to Robert Doran “Bob” Young, September 18, 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Passmore “Bob” Boell, interview by the author, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 26, 2017.

The younger Boell also noted that while studying at Princeton Theological Seminary in the 1930s, his father “frequently worshipped at Witherspoon Church,” referring to Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church, a historic, predominantly black local congregation. He also said that the West Chester Country Club denied membership to African Americans and Jews in the 1950s, and his father was not a member there at the time. He added that while at Westminster in the 1950s his father participated in a Jewish-Christian pulpit exchange. Robert Passmore “Bob” Boell, e-mail message to the author, September 26, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ “I went to High St [sic] School from 1951-55. The schools were integrated by the time I got there.” Susan “Sue” Tiernan, e-mail message to the author, September 27, 2017.

¹¹⁰ Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, pp. 274-275; Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), July 17, 1951, “West Chester Public Schools: West Chester Boro School Board, Directors 1951” folder, Chester County Historical Society; Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), November 20, 1951, “West Chester Public Schools: Directors, 1951 (2)” folder, Chester County Historical Society.

¹¹¹ Tiernan also said, “My mother’s cleaning lady used to tell her not to pay any mind to those troublemakers,” thus echoing some of the criticism Helena Robinson received from fellow African Americans. Susan “Sue” Tiernan, e-mail message to the author, September 21, 2017.

¹¹² Susan “Sue” Tiernan, telephone interview by the author, September 27, 2017.

¹¹³ Anderson Porter, interview by the author, West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017; Miller, *A Legacy of Learning*, p. 116.

¹¹⁴ “I can confirm that one hundred percent everything that [Wilmore] has said, and, Rev. Robert Boell, he, was prejudiced. And, I heard that if you, when I came, even in 1960, that if you came to his house, you had to come through the back door. But his son and I became friends, and his son wasn’t prejudiced, as far as I could see. But Bob Boell was.” Porter, interview by the author, West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017. Porter’s recollection of Boell’s supposed requirement that African Americans enter his house via the back door is relevant, given Porter’s acquaintance with Boell and with other African Americans in the area at the time. However, his knowledge of such a supposed requirement is secondhand, and therefore not necessarily reliable.

¹¹⁵ Porter, interview by the author, West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017.

¹¹⁶ This sermon was part of a series by Boell on the Kingdom of God. The *Daily Local News* printed these notes on Boell’s sermon in a column alongside the report of Wilmore’s sermon from the same day.

“Excerpts from Sunday’s Sermons: First Presbyterian Westminster Presbyterian,” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), August 21, 1950, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

Boell had also served as chair of the presbytery’s Social Education and Action Committee in the late 1940s through 1950. Minutes, January 24, 1950, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*.

¹¹⁷ Minutes, “Pro Re Nata Meeting - May 27, 1951, Lincoln University, Pa.” p. 375, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester; Minutes, “Stated Meeting - September 25, 1951 - Upper Octorara Church, Parkesburg, Pa.,” p. 382, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

¹¹⁸ Minutes, January 7, 1952, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*.

¹¹⁹ Minutes, June 12, 1950, p. 48, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*; Minutes, January 24, 1950, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*.

¹²⁰ Minutes, January 2, 1951, p. 56, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*.

¹²¹ “Seminarion Ordained”; Minutes, “Pro Re Nata Meeting - May 27, 1951, Lincoln University, Pa.,” p. 375, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.

Wilmore, Spann, Barber, Stevens, and Murray all participated in Moyer’s ordination at Lincoln in 1952. Wilmore, Spann, and Murray all participated in Kilgore’s ordination at Lincoln in 1951. Kilgore later served as President of Black Presbyterians United, and wrote the preface to the first edition of *Black and Presbyterian*, explaining that the idea for that book came out of conversations between Kilgore, Wilmore, and other black clergy and seminarians at San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1980. Kilgore and several other Presbyterian ministers including Clarence Cave and LeRoy Patrick would later work closely with Gayraud Wilmore and J. Metz Rollins “in relating to the black churches, community organizations, and NCNC” during the Black Power era. Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. ix; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 68 (note 20).

¹²² “April Stated Meeting - April 24, 1951, West Chester, Pa.,” p. 366, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester; Minutes, January 2, 1951, p. 56, *Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester*.

¹²³ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59.

¹²⁴ Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 46.

¹²⁵ There is some variance among sources between an 1893 and 1894 founding date for the organization, but 1894 is the correct date. The Presbyterian Historical Society includes the programs from the Council's annual meetings for 1899 and from 1948 to 1957. The 1953 program, for the annual meeting held that year at Milton Galamison's church, included, for the first time among available programs, a printed history of the organization. This history says, "The Presbyterian Council of the North and West was formed September 27, 1894 in the City of Philadelphia...." Each meeting and program is also titled with the year since the organization's founding, as in "Sixtieth Annual Session," and these numbers accord with an 1894 founding date. This is true even of the 1899 "sixth annual" meeting. This cover of this 1899 program says, "Presbyterian Council, 1899.: The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Colored Presbyterian Council of Ministers and Elders in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, will be held in the Washington Street Presbyterian Church, Reading, Pa., Thursday, October 26-29, 1899." E. F. Eggleston was the president and R. H. Armstrong the secretary. William D. Robeson, father of Paul Robeson and pastor of Witherspoon Street Presbyterian in Princeton, New Jersey, as well as Matthew Anderson and Francis Grimke, were all scheduled to deliver papers as a part of the annual meeting. "Presbyterian Council, 1899.: The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Colored Presbyterian Council of Ministers and Elders in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, will be held in the Washington Street Presbyterian Church, Reading, Pa., Thursday, October 26-29, 1899," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32, Presbyterian Historical Society; "Sixtieth Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-11, 1953, Siloam Presbyterian Church (Brooklyn, New York)," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West.

Despite the 1894 founding date cited by these organizational records, as well as the organization's name as of 1899 being listed as "Colored Presbyterian Council..." two historians have given different founding dates and names for the group. Gayraud Wilmore and Andrew Murray both have written that the group started in 1893 as the "Afro-Presbyterian Council." Wilmore has acknowledged relying heavily on Murray for his writings on the Council. Despite the fact that Murray's book is titled *Presbyterians and the Negro: A History*, Murray devoted only two of the book's 240 pages to this organization, supported by four footnotes, and lamented that "we have few records of the history of this council." It seems, therefore, that the Council's internal records, to which Murray and Wilmore may not have had access, are more accurate than the accounts of either of these historians. The current website of the National Black Presbyterian Caucus matches, and likely relies on, the narrative provided by Murray and Wilmore. Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, pp. 211-213; Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., pp. 45-47; Gayraud Wilmore, letter to Mrs. Dorothea Murray, October 16, 1991; "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)," National Black Presbyterian Caucus, 2018, accessed April 24, 2019, <https://nationalnbpc.org/historical-overview/>.

Elsewhere, Wilmore has written that the organization began as the "Afro-American Presbyterian Council," on September 27, 1894, citing a 1934 document. The information provided above about the 1856 caucus meeting comes from this source. In it, Wilmore wrote, "Black Presbyterian and Congregational clergy met at Central Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia on October 28, 1857. It was evidently their second meeting. Elymas P. Rogers, moderator of the previous meeting, presumably in 1856, preached the sermon." Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Identity and Integration: Black Presbyterians and Their Allies in the Twentieth Century," *The Diversity of Discipleship*, ed. Milton J. Coalter et al (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, pp. 209-233), pp. 211, 374.

Still elsewhere, Wilmore has referred to the 1850s informal caucusing in a more formal sense, calling it, "The Evangelical Association of Colored Ministers of Congregational and Presbyterian Churches," a predominantly Presbyterian group of about twenty ministers and laypeople, which was organized in 1856 at Shiloh Presbyterian Church in New York City by Elymas Rogers, Henry Highland Garnet, and J. W. C. Pennington. Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," *Periscope 4: African American Presbyterians - Living into the 21st Century: Breakthroughs and Challenges, 197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004*, Racial Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004, p. 17.

¹²⁶ In two sources, Wilmore has written that the organization began as the "Afro-American Presbyterian Council." In both sources, Wilmore also said that the organization changed its name to the "Afro-American Presbyterian Council of the North and West" in the 1920s-30s. Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 211, 216; Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17. In another source, he said it began as the "Afro-Presbyterian Council." Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., pp. 45-46. As previously noted, the 1940s records of McDowell Presbyterian Church refer to the group as the "Afro-American Council."

¹²⁷ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 211.

¹²⁸ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 211.

¹²⁹ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 211.

¹³⁰ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 212. See also Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 218-219. See also: "Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark's Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio)," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. This program for this 1954 meeting (held at the church James H. Robinson had joined as a teenager) again provided the history of the Council, which was identical to that of the previous year, except for an added paragraph, in boldface, quoted from "Statement of the World Council of Churches - Evanston, Illinois, August, 1954": "As we learn more about our unity in Christ, it becomes the more intolerable that we should be divided. Segregation in all its forms is contrary to the gospel, and is incompatible with the Christian doctrine of man, and with the nature of the Church of Christ. The church is urged to eliminate all forms of segregation and discrimination within its own life and in society. This is one of the objectives of our Council." This was the first Council meeting after that historic WCCC meeting in Evanston and, more importantly, after the May 17, 1954 *Brown v. Board U.S. Supreme Court* case.

¹³¹ Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47; Richard Waldron Bauer and Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1," Interview recorded at the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly (194th : 1982 : Hartford, Connecticut), audio cassette, housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17. See also Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 219-220.

¹³² Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47.

¹³³ Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17; Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47. Bauer and Wilmore, "Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1"; "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)," National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

Black and Presbyterian says that Concerned Presbyterians was founded in 1964, as does the NBPC website. However, Wilmore used the 1963 date in his book chapter, "Identity and Integration," and in his "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," both of which seem more accurate than *Black and Presbyterian* or the NBPC website on these details. Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 222-223; Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17.

¹³⁴ Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17; Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47; "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)," National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

¹³⁵ Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17; Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47; "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)," National Black Presbyterian Caucus. See also *All-Black Governing Bodies: The History and Contributions of All-Black Governing Bodies in the Predecessor Denominations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* (Louisville, Kentucky: The Office of the General Assembly, 1996). This resource examines all-black American Presbyterian synods and presbyteries in the South. The Council of the North and West is not included - it was not in the South, and it also was not a governing body, rather it was a non-governing association.

¹³⁶ "Fifty-Eighth Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, Theme, 'The New Testament Church,' October 10-14, 1951, held in Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, p. 23. The list of "Ministers of the Council" on pp. 22-23 includes the ministers' home addresses. Oddly, Wilmore's is simply listed as "Witherspoon Bldg., Philadelphia, Pa." However, perhaps the program creator merely did not know some of the members' addresses, as is evident by Samuel G. Stevens' listing as simply of "Lincoln University, Pa.," and several others as "Chaplain, U. S. Army."

¹³⁷ In 1951, Robinson was the Council's President and Patrick its Vice-President (and incoming President), Stevens its Chairman for Social Education and Action, Cave its Chairman for Young People's Work, Walter Bowen its Chairman for Nominating, Edler Hawkins its Chairman for both Evangelism and Budget, Thelma Hawkins its Chairman for Women's Finance, and Johnson its Field Representative. John Dillingham was elected as the new SEA Chairman, and Galamison as an at-large member of the Executive Committee. Wilmore was listed as a member of the organization, but not as a delegate to this annual meeting. All of these individuals as well as Rooks, Barber, Wilson, Rankin, Spann, Glasco, and the two laypeople from McDowell Church (Mrs. Charles Freeman and Mrs. Zenobia Jeffers) are listed as delegates and/or minister members "Fifty-Eighth Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, Theme, 'The New Testament Church,' October 10-14, 1951, held in Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)," pp. 4-6, 16, 22-23.

¹³⁸ The first program in which Wilmore's name appeared other than as a member was in 1954. That year's schedule for October 7 listed an untitled "address" by Wilmore, immediately following, and perhaps in connection with, a seminar led by Walter Bowen on "The Stewardship of Vocation." The same seminar and "address" were listed again on October 8. In the 1955 program, there was an October 7 session on "The Christian Community and its Beliefs," led by Robert Newbold and "The Rev. Jyrod [sic] Wilmore, Board of Christian Education." "Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark's Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio)"; "Sixty-Second Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 5th-9th, 1955, Jethro Presbyterian Church (Atlantic City, New Jersey)," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West.

¹³⁹ "Sixty-Second Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 5th-9th, 1955, Jethro Presbyterian Church (Atlantic City, New Jersey)"; "Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark's Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio)"; "Theme: 'New Life Movement': The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-10, 1948, Washington St. Presbyterian Church (Reading, Pennsylvania)," annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West.

¹⁴⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]." As previously discussed, the documentary evidence indicates that Wilmore's salary was approximately \$2,640 per year: \$1,400 from Second Presbyterian, \$1,000 from the Presbytery of Chester, and \$120 each from Westminster and First Presbyterian Churches in West Chester. Perhaps Wilmore was thinking here of only his \$1,400 base salary, or perhaps the funds from the Presbytery of Chester were discontinued at some point during his ministry there.

¹⁴¹ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

¹⁴² Several sources, mostly from Wilmore himself, have mistakenly stated that Wilmore served as pastor of Second Presbyterian from 1950 to 1953, the earliest such error in that regard dating back to 1965. The confusion may have arisen from the fact that, including his time as a temporary pastor, Wilmore served for the greater part of three academic years there, from October 1949 to February 1952. At some point he may have started counting those three years of service as having begun with his 1950 seminary graduation and pastoral installation. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111; Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), February 11, 1965, "Wilmore, G." folder, Chester County Historical Society.

Wilmore's last Sunday at Second Presbyterian was January 27, 1952, and he began this new job on February 1, 1952. Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 8, 1951; Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 28, 1952, "West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers" folder, Chester County Historical Society; "Stated Meeting, January 22, 1952 at Berwyn, Pennsylvania," p. 401, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester; "College Circuit-Rider: Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. - Student Christian Movement Representative," *Presbyterian Life*, January 8, 1955, "West Goshen Township Churches: Baptist Church, Ministers" folder, Chester County Historical Society; "Regional Secretary of S. D. M. Speaks in Chapel" (*The Lincolnian*, February 26, 1953, p. 2).

-
- ¹⁴³ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 28, 1952.
- ¹⁴⁴ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 28, 1952.
- ¹⁴⁵ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 28, 1952.
- ¹⁴⁶ “Stated Meeting, January 22, 1952 at Berwyn, Pennsylvania,” p. 401, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.
- ¹⁴⁷ “Stated Meeting, January 22, 1952 at Berwyn, Pennsylvania,” p. 401, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.
- ¹⁴⁸ “Stated Meeting, January 22, 1952 at Berwyn, Pennsylvania,” pp. 402-403, Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester.
- ¹⁴⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.
- ¹⁵⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; “From this Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore” (Social Progress, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955, p. 1).
- ¹⁵¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.
- ¹⁵² Mary Mulkerin Donius, “Trailblazer,” *The Boston Globe*, April 23, 2006, p. 59.
- ¹⁵³ Donius, “Trailblazer.”
- ¹⁵⁴ “College Circuit-Rider”; “Regional Secretary of S. D. M. Speaks in Chapel”; Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 8, 1951.
- ¹⁵⁵ “College Circuit-Rider.”
- ¹⁵⁶ Untitled news clipping, *Daily Local News* (West Chester), December 8, 1951.
- ¹⁵⁷ Dorothy C. Bass, “Ministry on the Margin: Protestants and Education,” in *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*, ed. William R. Hutchison (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 48-71), pp. 49-50, 56-58.
- ¹⁵⁸ Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” p. 58.
- ¹⁵⁹ Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” pp. 56, 58.
- ¹⁶⁰ Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” p. 58.
- ¹⁶¹ Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” p. 58.
- ¹⁶² Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” p. 58. The “university pastorate movement” also coincided with another successful effort among mainline Protestants to promote religion, of a sort, on ostensibly secular campuses, through encouraging the academic study of religion, a movement credited with the creation of religion departments at “two-thirds of all accredited colleges..., including 100 percent of church-related colleges and 30 percent of state-supported schools.” Bass, “Ministry on the Margin,” pp. 59-60.
- ¹⁶³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.
- ¹⁶⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.
- See also, Wilson, Sr., *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, p. 45. “In 1953, he was invited to become a member of the Executive Staff of the Student Christian Movement in the Middle Atlantic Region, with headquarters in Philadelphia. This provided fresh and exciting contact with students and faculty in colleges and universities at a time when the relation of higher education to the problems of society was under serious examination. Some questions at issue were: Christian values in college teaching, freedom and order in a democratic society, the theological basis of social action, student participation in institutional planning, civil rights and national security, the Cold War and the emerging third world, neo-colonialism and independence movements in Africa, the developing crisis in black-white relations in the U.S.A. His far-reaching campus ministry involved students, faculty and administrators in study, reflection and action on these issues as they affected the Christian witness in society and the objectives of higher education.”
- ¹⁶⁵ Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, “The Quest for Holiness,” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*, ed. Eugene G. Turner (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999), p. 87. Beaver College is now Arcadia University.
- ¹⁶⁶ Gonzalez, “The Quest for Holiness,” p. 87.
- ¹⁶⁷ “Regional Secretary of S. D. M. Speaks in Chapel.”
- ¹⁶⁸ “Regional Secretary of S. D. M. Speaks in Chapel.”

¹⁶⁹ His anecdote’s language about “advertising the overthrow of the Government” was quite similar to the description by the West Chester *Daily Local News* of the oath required of state employees by the 1951 Pennsylvania Loyalty Act, to pledge non-membership “in any organization that advocates the overthrow of the government of the United States.”

¹⁷⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁷¹ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁷² “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁷³ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁷⁴ Wilmore thought of his SCM work as tied closely to ongoing student anti-discrimination activism, at least in retrospect, according to a 2016 Wilmore email: “The action of the Lincoln University students against discrimination in places of accommodation in that part of the country and the forced desegregation that was mandated spread like wildfire throughout the area where Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware came close together, both geographically and emotionally. There were sit-ins, rallies of white resistance and Black discontent with the slow effect of the Supreme Court’s decision in landmark cases against ‘separate but equal.’ Everyone knew that America was under judgment and that deep, volcanic changes were at the doorstep and the old ways were being shoved out the back door. My life was caught up in some of those changes in the late 1950s. I found the SCM, working with students and faculties in five states and the District of Columbia, an exciting enterprise. With an office on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania at 3601 Locust Street, we counseled and gave organizing leadership through campus visitations and summer conferencing to a few hundred young college men and women, white and Black, who became the base of the student activism that marked C.O.R.E and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the 1960s and ‘70s.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹⁷⁵ Porter, interview by the author, West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017.

¹⁷⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁷⁷ Marbury, *Pillars of Cloud and Fire*, pp. 6-9.

¹⁷⁸ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁷⁹ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁸⁰ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁸¹ “College Circuit-Rider.”

¹⁸² Ronald H. Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992), p. 115; Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Role in Political Thought,” *Reinhold Niebuhr; His Religious Social, and Political Thought*, ed. Charles W. Kegley (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, pp. 190-214), pp. 198, 210.

¹⁸³ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁴ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁵ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁸⁶ Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), p. 62.

¹⁸⁷ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁸⁸ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, p. 116. The organization and Niebuhr himself became less socialist over time, and by 1951 its statement of purpose’s only economic component was to demand that the government seek “to maintain a high and stable level of economic activity.” Schlesinger, Jr., “Reinhold Niebuhr’s Role in Political Thought,” p. 211.

¹⁸⁹ Stone, *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁹⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016. By “nonconformist,” Wilmore seems to have been referring to those who refused to conform to social, military, religious, or political norms amid the highly conformist 1950s - the decade of McCarthyism, “Massive Resistance” to desegregation, “white flight,” and increasing church membership in the U.S.

¹⁹¹ Wilmore actually wrote that this organization sought to be “the Northern, interracial counterpart to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.” However, the SCLC was generated out of the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Therefore while many in Christian Action may well have thought of themselves as a Northern, interracial Civil Rights organization and would have been aware of ongoing Civil Rights work in the South, and while the boycott did begin a few months before Christian Action’s dissolution, it is unlikely that Christian Action members compared themselves at the time to that particular organization. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹⁹² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹⁹³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016. Original source says “several left-of-center ballons [sic].”

¹⁹⁴ Patrick Parr, *The Seminarian: Martin Luther King, Jr. Comes of Age* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2018), pp. 148-149.

¹⁹⁵ Parr, *The Seminarian*, p. 196.

¹⁹⁶ Parr, *The Seminarian*, pp. 198-199.

¹⁹⁷ Parr, *The Seminarian*, p. 199.

¹⁹⁸ This sermon took place on February 25, 1951. Parr, *The Seminarian*, p. 192. Parr’s source is “Helen Hunt Reports,” *Chester Times*, February 24, 1951 and April 14, 1951.

¹⁹⁹ Smith continued to serve on Crozer’s faculty for more than four decades, even after it moved to Rochester in 1970 to become Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, where was joined in 1974 by a new faculty member, Gayraud S. Wilmore.

²⁰⁰ Wilmore joined the BCE staff in December 1955. “From this Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955, p. 1); Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁰¹ “From this Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore.”

²⁰² Wilson had been on the board, known as the “Counseling Committee on Social Education and Action,” as early as 1951, and was listed for the first time as its chairman with the September 1954 issue, the same issue which listed Rooks as on the board for the first time. “Contents: September, 1951” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLII, No. 1, September 1951); “Contents: September, 1954” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLV, No. 1, September 1954); “Contents: November, 1955” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955).

²⁰³ Scott had been listed on the masthead as an SEA Staffer, specifically an “Industrial Relations Consultant,” from October 1953 to October 1955. Hawkins was first listed as on the board as of the September 1957 issue. “Contents: September, 1953” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIV, No. 1, September 1953); “Contents: October, 1953” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIV, No. 2, October 1953); “Contents: October, 1955” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 2, October 1955); “Contents: November, 1955”; “Contents: September, 1957” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, September 1955);

²⁰⁴ “Theme: ‘New Life Movement’: The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-10, 1948, Washington St. Presbyterian Church (Reading, Pennsylvania).”

²⁰⁵ “Theme: ‘New Life Movement’: The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-10, 1948, Washington St. Presbyterian Church (Reading, Pennsylvania).”

²⁰⁶ “Theme: ‘New Life Movement’: The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-10, 1948, Washington St. Presbyterian Church (Reading, Pennsylvania).”

²⁰⁷ “Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio).”

²⁰⁸ “Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio).” It seems that “Council” referred to the WCC, but the Council of the North and West perhaps wanted to imply that it was an objective of *their* council as well.

²⁰⁹ “Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio).”

²¹⁰ “Sixty-Second Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 5th-9th, 1955, Jethro Presbyterian Church (Atlantic City, New Jersey).”

²¹¹ “Sixty-Second Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 5th-9th, 1955, Jethro Presbyterian Church (Atlantic City, New Jersey).”

²¹² “From this Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore.” The SEA staff and Wilmore were also in the relatively small world of Philadelphia-area Presbyterianism, which itself was closely connected to Lincoln University. There would have been a variety of other opportunities in addition to meetings of the Council of the North and West for Wilmore to come into contact with SEA leaders.

²¹³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 60; Bauer and Wilmore, “Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1.”

²¹⁴ “The Department of Social Education and Action has an important role in the formulation of the pronouncements. Members of the executive staff work with both the Counseling Committee and the Standing Committee as resource persons and consultants. In the fall, the staff... provides for the Counseling Committee a resume of former pronouncements and other useful data on social issues and areas of concern, and its own interpretation of the social needs to which the church ought to speak. The staff also transmits to the Counseling Committee all communications from judicatories, churches, and persons.... It should be underscored, however, that the pronouncements are not ‘written’ by the staff of the Department of Social Education and Action. Members of the staff are used by the committees and take part in the committee discussions only as resource persons. The Counseling Committee and the Standing Committee bear full responsibility for the reports they prepare.... The committees are bound to pay some attention to the ‘by and large’ thinking of the Presbyterian Church’s members on the issues before them, in so far as it can be known or estimated. The consensus of Presbyterians, however, is not the determining factor in formulating the pronouncements.” “How a Pronouncement Is Born” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIX, No. 9, July 1959, pp. 32-38), p. 35.

²¹⁵ Bauer and Wilmore, “Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1.”

²¹⁶ Wilmore, “Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations,” pp. 100-101.

²¹⁷ “This historic, upper-middle class, overwhelmingly white and wealthy Protestant church was headed for the goal of racially integrated congregations in racially integrated and progressive urban contexts, working with dynamic secular movements to bring in, with the help of God, a healthy, ethical and peaceful world for generations to come.” Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

²¹⁸ The PC (USA) merged with a smaller denomination, the United Presbyterian Church of North America, in 1958 to form the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA). The UPCUSA and the PC (US) merged in 1983 to form the Presbyterian Church (USA), which is currently the largest Presbyterian denomination in the United States. Frank S. Mead et al, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 12th ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005), pp. 141-143. Wilmore, therefore, has been a member of the largest American Presbyterian denomination since his childhood: the PC (USA) from his joining in 1937 to 1958, the UPCUSA from 1958 to 1983, and the new PC (USA) from 1983 to the present.

²¹⁹ The larger, predominantly non-southern denomination also included churches predominated by other racial/ethnic groups, especially Mexican Americans and Korean Americans.

²²⁰ Wilmore wrote that he “believed generally what Dr. Clifford Earle..., Margaret Kuhn, Howard Maxwell, and Ben Sissel... believed.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

²²¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017. See also a January 1955 “Special Race Relations Issue” of *Social Progress* with the theme, “Segregation on Sunday?” The foreword, by Stated Clerk Eugene Carson Blake and BCE General Secretary Paul Calvin Payne stated that the issue focused on “specific steps by which a particular church can desegregate itself, become inclusive, and achieve a truly integrated Christian fellowship,” in order to “help to bridge the gap, at the local church level, between our practice and our pronouncements for ‘a nonsegregated church and a nonsegregated society.’” It also said that this was a follow-up on a 1952 SEA handbook, *Everyone Welcome*, “on racial and cultural relations for use in the local church.” This issue, however, was meant to deal specifically with the desegregation of local churches. Frank Wilson also contributed one of the articles. He wrote, “There is a touch of pathos in the defensiveness with which many Negro churchmen cling to the Negro church as the only guarantee of freedom in religious experience and unlimited responsibility in religious leadership. Likewise, there is a tragic note in the assertions of white churchmen that there is no contradiction between enthusiasm for the world mission of the Church and cold resistance to a racially inclusive church at home.” The back cover of the issue included a partial list of “Integrated Presbyterian Churches.” Another article was by Ben Sissel about one of those churches, which had pastored, in Detroit. Eugene Carson Blake and Paul Calvin Payne, “Foreword” (*Social Progress*, “Special Race Relations Issue,” Vol. XLV, No. 5, January, 1955, p. 1); Frank T. Wilson, “By What Power?” (*Social Progress*, “Special Race Relations Issue,” Vol. XLV, No. 5, January, 1955, pp. 46-48), p. 47; H. B. Sissel, “Five Churches That Didn’t Run: St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Detroit, Mich. (*Social Progress*, “Special Race Relations Issue,” Vol. XLV, No. 5, January, 1955), pp. 3-17.

²²² Quoted in Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 219.

²²³ Wilmore has cited “the glow of an unprecedented era of good feeling - largely generated by Clifford Earle, Margaret Kuhn, and other white allies” in the SEA, and said that black Presbyterians had been “beguiled and pacified by the attitudinal-change approach to race relations that came out of the [BCE] prior to Clifford Earle, Margaret Kuhn, and H. Ben Sissel.” Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” pp. 219-220. I do not think that Wilmore meant to say or imply that Earle, Kuhn, or Sissel were deceptive, nor that they themselves supported only “attitudinal change.” Instead, I think Wilmore has implied here that these SEA staffers were unrepresentative of all PC (USA) members - just as the nine Supreme Court justices who unanimously handed down the Brown decision were unrepresentative of all Americans. Black Presbyterians mistakenly thought both groups more representative of their constituencies than they actually were.

²²⁴ Maggie Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned: The Life and Times of Maggie Kuhn* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 98.

²²⁵ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, November 28, 2016 and February 6, 2017.

²²⁶ “From this Vantage Point...” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIX, No. 4, December 1958, pp. 1-4), p. 3; “Contents: November, 1955” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955).

²²⁷ “From this Vantage Point...: Introducing Gayraud Wilmore.”

²²⁸ John C. Bennett, “Concern - A Christian Responsibility” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955, pp. 5-10).

²²⁹ “From this Vantage Point: ‘Integration’ Begins at Home” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955, pp. 2-3).

²³⁰ “From this Vantage Point: ‘Integration’ Begins at Home,” p. 2.

²³¹ “From this Vantage Point: ‘Integration’ Begins at Home,” p. 2.

²³² “From this Vantage Point: ‘Integration’ Begins at Home,” p. 2.

²³³ “From this Vantage Point: ‘Integration’ Begins at Home,” p. 3.

²³⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²³⁵ Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 102.

²³⁶ Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 98.

²³⁷ “The social action department came out of the same tradition of Christian social reform that gave birth to the YWCA, the temperance movement, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to children, and the Salvation Army. These great movements, inspired by the evangelical revival of the late nineteenth century, demanded that Christians take on more of the problems of real human beings. Out of deep religious conviction, they wrestled with the complexities of twentieth-century life. Their influence can be seen in hundreds of organizations and government social programs today.” Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 98.

²³⁸ “Every year, the Church’s presbyteries and synods individually considered what stand they wanted the Church as a whole to take on important social issues. They would submit their proposals to us and we, in turn, would present them to the Assembly. Our work brought the tensions between liberals and conservatives in the Church to the fore, and our proposals frequently caused fiery debate on the floor of the Assembly. Department members, sometimes called commies and kooks by conservatives, tended to be more liberal than the Church membership at large. Whenever I was making a speech before a group that I suspected might be a little cool on my ideas, I would dress in an especially becoming, though prim, hat. You know, they say the Indians hunted Buffalo with Buffalo skins on their heads.” Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 99.

²³⁹ Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 99.

²⁴⁰ Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, pp. 105-106.

²⁴¹ Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 103.

²⁴² Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 103. Interestingly, while Kuhn mentioned Earle and Sissel in her autobiography, she did not mention Wilmore. Also, she wrote, “I remember once someone from another department in the Witherspoon Building came to our office in need of information on a particular issue. She asked for Dr. Earle and was told he was not in. She then asked for Ben Sissel, my great friend and co-worker, and was told that he too was out. ‘But Margaret Kuhn is here,’ our eager secretary volunteered.’ ‘No thanks,’ said the visitor. ‘I didn’t want to know *that* much about it.’” Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, p. 104.

²⁴³ “In 1969 I was working as a program executive for the Church’s Council on Church and Race, but was involved in a number of social action projects, including a subcommittee on the problems of the old.” “... about seven months before my sixty-fifth birthday, the man who supervised the Council on Church and Race where I worked came to talk to me. To my utter shock, he asked if I would retire that summer.” Kuhn “had never given retirement much thought,” and “had hoped the Church would ask me to stay on in my job on a year-to-year basis, as they had done with other executives of retirement age. As I felt energetic enough to go on for many years, the idea of retiring struck me as ludicrous and depressing. My work was my whole life. I couldn’t envision myself with no serious purpose in life and cut off from the wide circle of friends at work.” “In the end I had no choice but to retire. In the following weeks the Board of Christian Education insisted I adhere to the Church’s traditional retirement age.” She was permitted to stay until the end of the year, past her August birthday. She then formed the “Consultation of Older Persons,” which would later become known as the Gray Panthers. “I remember my going-away party. My co-workers had gotten together and bought me a sewing machine - a beautiful gift, but a miscalculation of how I planned to spend my time. I never opened it. I set up a makeshift office at home and got to work.” Kuhn, *No Stone Unturned*, pp. 126, 128-129, 132-134, 138. Wilmore denies having been involved in Kuhn’s forced retirement, so perhaps Edler Hawkins, as chair of COCAR, was the man who first approached her about retirement.

²⁴⁴ “There is nothing we can do about it short of withdrawing to the dubious security of admitting the irrelevance of the faith to contemporary economic problems and policies. This we are not disposed to do..... [we] are not willing to abandon the arena of decision to government and the vagaries of economic power groups.” “How are we sharing our abundance with more needy folk around the world?... Some Christians say we in the U.S. should think of foreign aid as a sort of sharing of a tithe of our annual output with the underdeveloped areas. Some Christians suggest sharing about 1 percent of it.” Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Our Expanding Economy” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 10, June 1957, pp. 5-11), pp. 5, 8.

²⁴⁵ Gayraud Wilmore, “Worship: For Freedom... Set Us Free” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 6, February 1956, pp. 24-25).

²⁴⁶ Wilmore, “Worship: For Freedom... Set Us Free,” pp. 24-25.

²⁴⁷ Wilmore, “Worship: For Freedom... Set Us Free,” p. 25.

²⁴⁸ Wilmore, “Worship: For Freedom... Set Us Free,” pp. 24-25. The November 1955 editorial - in the same issue which had introduced Wilmore as a new staffer, addressed an “Incident in Mississippi.” Presbyterian relief workers at the “Providence Co-operative Farm,” an “interracial project” which “includes a medical clinic which serves sharecropper families on a strictly interracial basis,” had been called to a mass “protest” meeting at which white citizens charged them with “working against segregation,” where these relief workers “bluntly declared that they thought segregation to be unchristian.” The meeting then decided “by a vote of 400 to 2,” that the two workers and their families be “ordered to give up their work and leave the county.” The authors say, “it should be noted that the Till tragedy occurred in an adjoining county. While things are happening in one section of the country, it is good to note the attention that newspapers have given to a Methodist church in Connecticut, a white congregation, which has welcomed a Negro minister.” Emmett Till had been murdered four months prior to this issue’s publication. “From This Vantage Point: Incident in Mississippi” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3, November 1955, pp. 3-4), pp. 3-4.

²⁴⁹ For “quasi-,” recall his reference to “the quasi-conservative but justice-seeking theology of Lincoln’s college and theological seminary.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016. For the exclamation to close a listing sentence at the end of a paragraph, see: “If these tactics are *wrong*, then the Triumphal Entry was wrong, the Temple cleansing was wrong; so was the civil disobedience of the early church, the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, the Boston Tea Party, the conspiracy against the Fugitive Slave Act and demonstrations, strikes and boycotts of the labor movement for recognition and collective bargaining. If American Christians can (no longer) condone violence, they must at least concede that disruptive confrontation is as Christian as street corner revivals and as American as the Fourth of July!” Wilmore, Jr., *The Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 12.

²⁵⁰ “From This Vantage Point: Crisis in Human Rights” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 7, March 1957, pp. 3-6), p. 3.

²⁵¹ “From This Vantage Point: Crisis in Human Rights,” p. 3.

²⁵² “From This Vantage Point: Crisis in Human Rights,” p. 3.

²⁵³ “From This Vantage Point: Crisis in Human Rights,” p. 4.

²⁵⁴ “From This Vantage Point: Crisis in Human Rights,” p. 6.

²⁵⁵ “From This Vantage Point” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, September 1957, pp. 3-4), p. 3.

²⁵⁶ “From This Vantage Point” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 1, September 1957, pp. 3-4), p. 4.

²⁵⁷ Clifford Earle, Margaret Kuhn, H. B. Sissel, and Gayraud Wilmore, “From This Vantage Point...: The Minister’s Role” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 4, December 1955, pp. 1-2), p. 3. Most jointly authored editorials were signed by the “SEA Staff,” but this one listed all of their names, perhaps to emphasize the addition of Wilmore to the staff as of this issue.

²⁵⁸ “Most ministers are reasonably alive to their responsibility in this phase of the Church’s witness. They need no help in discerning the everyday relevance of Christian truths and the practical meaning of Christian ideals. They feel that the Church ought to do something about the social forces that bear upon the lives of people, which often make it hard for men and women to be the kind of persons God wants them to be. Rarely does one find a clergyman today who says that community problems are no concern of the Church.” Earle et al, “From This Vantage Point...: The Minister’s Role,” p. 1.

²⁵⁹ “Books on public affairs are useful, but book knowledge is not enough. Unless there is a conscious effort on the part of the pastor to identify himself with the people among whom he walks, as well as with those who are not of his immediate flock, he may find that his ministry, and consequently the church he serves, have little relevance to life.” Earle et al, “From This Vantage Point...: The Minister’s Role,” p. 2. Note also the use of the favorite Wilmore word, “maelstrom.”

²⁶⁰ “Contents: October, 1956” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, October 1956).

²⁶¹ In terms of style, the editorial used the prefix “quasi-,” as in the “quasi-lobbying activities” of the denomination, and it also used quotations around terms, as in “so-called ‘minor’ political offices,” “a kind of ‘Christian politics,’” “all crusades that would erect a ‘Christian society,’” “the easy assumption of many ‘Christian citizens’ groups,” “a sense of the ‘legitimate secularity’ of the world’s business,” “a faith in the ‘majesty of truth,’” and “a more critical aspect, a ‘transcendent perspective.’” It also ended a paragraph with a list followed by an exclamation point: “They may represent a larger field of vision.... but... they have no prior validity to the declarations of other groups - the League of Women Voters, the AFL-CIO Political Action Committee, or the Republican Party!” “From this Vantage Point: A Note to Ministers About What to Say on the Sunday Before Election.” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, October 1956, pp. 3-6), pp. 3-5.

²⁶² Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, October 1956, pp. 7-13).

²⁶³ Wilmore, Jr., “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms,” p. 8.

²⁶⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms,” p. 8.

²⁶⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms,” p. 7.

²⁶⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “Presbyterians Look at the Platforms,” p. 9.

²⁶⁷ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Worship to Stay in the World: A Service of Worship in Preparation for Political Activity” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, October 1956, pp. 25-27).

²⁶⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “Worship to Stay in the World,” p. 25.

²⁶⁹ Wilmore, Jr., “Worship to Stay in the World,” pp. 25-26.

²⁷⁰ “Social Strategy for the Local Church” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 3, November 1956, pp. 8-11), p. 8.

²⁷¹ “Social Strategy for the Local Church,” p. 9.

²⁷² “Social Strategy for the Local Church,” p. 11.

²⁷³ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “The Pennsylvania Story” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 3, November 1956, pp. 12-15, 25-31), p. 12.

²⁷⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “The Pennsylvania Story,” p. 12.

²⁷⁵ “Bible Readings for Special Days: Advent Sunday” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVII, No. 4, December 1956, p. 5).

²⁷⁶ “Bible Readings for Special Days: Advent Sunday.”

²⁷⁷ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLVIII, No. 8, April 1958, pp. 4-8, 19-22), p. 4.

²⁷⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 5.

²⁷⁹ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 5.

²⁸⁰ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 5.

²⁸¹ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 5.

²⁸² Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 6.

²⁸³ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 6.

²⁸⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” pp. 6-7.

²⁸⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 7. See also James Hudnut-Beumler, *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and Its Critics, 1945-1965* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994); Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961).

²⁸⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 7.

²⁸⁷ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 7. This passage is repeated almost verbatim as the final two sentences the first chapter of Wilmore’s first book. “We are, in fact, caught in a cultural trap which, in terms of its tyranny over our essential humanity, its defections from the deepest sources of the Judaeo-Christian heritage, its almost irresistible determination of our thoughts and actions, has all the characteristics of that which the New Testament knows as the demonic. There is nothing left for us but to fight our way out.” Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 16.

²⁸⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 7.

²⁸⁹ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” pp. 7-8.

-
- ²⁹⁰ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 8. “Real enemy” is an example of military language.
- ²⁹¹ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 8.
- ²⁹² Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 8.
- ²⁹³ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 19.
- ²⁹⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 19.
- ²⁹⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 21.
- ²⁹⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 22. Note the militaristic language here.
- ²⁹⁷ Wilmore, Jr., “Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe,” p. 22. Note the militaristic language here.
- ²⁹⁸ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics: An Interview with a Big-City Politician” (*Social Progress*, Vol. L, No. 7, June 1960, pp. 32-38).
- ²⁹⁹ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 32.
- ³⁰⁰ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 32.
- ³⁰¹ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 32.
- ³⁰² Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 32.
- ³⁰³ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 32.
- ³⁰⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 33.
- ³⁰⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 34.
- ³⁰⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 34.
- ³⁰⁷ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 34.
- ³⁰⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 34.
- ³⁰⁹ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” pp. 34-35.
- ³¹⁰ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” pp. 35-36.
- ³¹¹ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 36.
- ³¹² Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 37.
- ³¹³ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 37.
- ³¹⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “The Christian in Organization Politics,” p. 38.
- ³¹⁵ “From This Vantage Point” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIX, No. 2, October 1958, pp. 3-4), p. 3.
- ³¹⁶ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon” (*Social Progress*, Vol. XLIX, No. 2, October 1958, pp. 13-15), p. 13.
- ³¹⁷ King’s visit to Ghana, arranged by Bayard Rustin, was for the occasion of the recognition of the nation’s independence under the leadership of its Prime Minister and perhaps Lincoln’s most famous graduate, Kwame Nkrumah, a ceremony which was also attended by A. Philip Randolph, Ralph Bunche, Horace Mann Bond, and Adam Clayton Powell. “Ghana Trip: Event, March 4, 1957 to March 12, 1957,” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/ghana-trip>. Lincoln’s most famous three graduates are Nkrumah, Langston Hughes, and Thurgood Marshall. Nkrumah is likely the most famous of the three, given his significance for independence movements throughout Africa.
- ³¹⁸ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 13.
- ³¹⁹ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 13.
- ³²⁰ This statement was in reference to the Mia Mia Camp near Sidon. “It was an unforgettable experience to visit... classrooms where two or three children were crowded on a seat for one, sharing a ragged textbook.” One of camps was named “Gouraud Camp,” a former French disciplinary barracks near Beirut. Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” pp. 13-14.
- ³²¹ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 14.
- ³²² Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 14.

³²³ According to Sylvester Johnson “we must dispense with the ‘saltwater fallacy’ that claims colonialism happens only overseas or in distant lands.” Johnson also says, “Colonialism, not merely slavery, defined the relationship of Blacks to the White American republic. In a literal sense, Blacks existed in the United States as an internal colony, subject to its governing rule but perpetually excluded from the body politic.” Sylvester A. Johnson, *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 2, 168.

³²⁴ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 15.

³²⁵ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 15.

³²⁶ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 15.

³²⁷ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 15.

³²⁸ Wilmore, Jr. “Ten Years After: Arab Refugees in Lebanon,” p. 15.

³²⁹ The Watts Rebellion took place before the popularization of the term “Black Power,” but was a clear antecedent, given the centrality of black rebellions in non-southern cities to that movement.

³³⁰ He described his coworkers and other associates at the SEA as “sophisticated and highly informed,” an observation which led him to “realize that my scholarship lacked the fine tuning and gravitas for the new field I had entered from parish ministry.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³³¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016; “By Way of Introduction” (*Social Progress*, Vol. LI, No. 1, October 1960, pp. 3-5), p. 4.

In March 1960, Wilmore wrote to Lincoln to request that his transcripts be sent to Drew University. “I have made application there for the Ph.D. Program for 1960-61 and transcripts are urgently needed by my committee.” He wrote on letterhead from the Princeton Inn in Princeton, New Jersey. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to unknown Lincoln University official, March 29, 1960, Lincoln student file for Gayraud Stephen Wilmore, Jr.

³³² “By Way of Introduction,” p. 4.

³³³ “... Pittsburgh Theological Seminary invited me to come to teach social ethics there, after giving me some time to work on a doctorate. They assumed that I could complete my doctorate in one year, because I had the STM. And if I had manipulated it some way I perhaps could have. But they were wrong, they gave me full salary, or part salary, and turned me loose. And I left the Board of Christian Education then in 1960, and went to Drew Theological Seminary as a doctoral student.” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

³³⁴ The editorial, written by the staff, identified him as “Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr.,” “known to his many friends... as ‘Gay,’” and said he “has accepted a position on the faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in the field of Christian social ethics. He completed his assignment with this office on September 1 and takes up his new duties, beginning with work on his doctorate at Drew University, immediately.” “By Way of Introduction,” p. 4.

³³⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017. Wilmore was not sure of the Herberg identification, but knew it was a Jewish scholar, and Herberg indeed taught at Drew from 1955 to 1963. “Will Herberg, 75, Ex-Professor at Drew University,” *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1977, accessed August 15, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1977/03/29/will-herberg-75-ex-professor-at-drew-university/6c8f72f4-9d3f-46ce-a3a3-b5826707a5a8/?utm_term=.154467d3c55a.

³³⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017; George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Scribner, 1965).

³³⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

³³⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

³³⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

³⁴⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, January 21, 2017.

³⁴¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, November 28, 2016 and January 21, 2017; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111.

“And I finished my languages there [at Drew], my French and German, and most of my residence, but the next year I transferred my residence to Temple. And then completed residence for the doctorate and began to write, or did write *Secular Relevance of the Church*, which I always believe was the reason I never did my dissertation, because instead of doing dissertation, I wrote *Secular Relevance of the Church* and edited twelve books for Westminster Press, on Christian perspectives on social issues.” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

Although Wilmore never earned the Ph.D. degree, he has received several honorary doctorates. Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, pp. 111-112.

³⁴² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016. “At any cause, in 1961 I reported, in the fall of ’61, I reported to Pittsburgh Seminary to teach, and then commuted back every week, either by plane or Greyhound bus, to Temple, where I completed my residency.... But that was a long commute, well course my mother lived in Philadelphia so I had a place to stay and I got all my meals, so, that helped.” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

Robert Doran “Bob” Young, who was Robert B. Boell’s successor as pastor of Westminster Presbyterian in West Chester, remembered taking a course alongside Wilmore while both were enrolled in the Ph.D. program in religion at Temple University. Young was a student there from 1958 to 1968. “The seminary at Temple used professors who had retired from Princeton or Union - like Andrew Blackwood, [Richard] Kroner, [Edwin] Lewis. Then the seminary closed in Philadelphia. Sometime in the early 60’s, Temple opened a new department of religion offering a PhD and allowing us to transfer credits from the seminary. They had an emphasis on World Religion.” Robert Doran “Bob” Young, e-mail messages to the author, September 23 and 24, 2017.

³⁴³ Gayraud S. Wilmore and Curtis A. Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge: A Dialogue Between Two Generations of Black Presbyterians” (*Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 48-58), pp. 53-54.

³⁴⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³⁴⁵ Eugene Turner, *My Life... A Story of Love, Hope, Faith and Family* (Suches, Georgia: Georgia Mountain Publishing, LLC, 2016), p. 36; Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50.

³⁴⁶ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, vii.

Turner was a student there from 1959 to 1962. He recalled being excluded from study groups with other students because of his deep interest in the theology of Paul Tillich, which many conservative students rejected. Turner also recalled seeking associations with faculty who were open to such theology, and avoiding others. Turner, *My Life*, p. 35.

³⁴⁷ “Another Black student, Ben Booker, came to the seminary during my senior year. Ben was an older man who had been in the insurance business in North Carolina. He was not a fighter, however, and would never question or contest the theological views of anyone else. This meant that he was seldom in conflict with the other students. He had strong feelings about justice issues and about the role of the church in society, but he didn’t usually express his thoughts and feelings to others.” Turner, *My Life*, pp. 35-36. Turner wrote that Wilmore came to PTS as a professor in 1959. However, *Social Progress* makes clear that Wilmore was not appointed until the fall of 1960, and it otherwise seems clear that, while perhaps Wilmore may have made some appearances at PTS during the 1960-61 academic year, he was not in residence or teaching courses there until the 1961-62 year, which was Turner’s senior year at the seminary. Turner, *My Life*, p. 36; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111.

³⁴⁸ Turner, *My Life*, p. 36.

³⁴⁹ Turner, *My Life*, pp. 36-37. Another of Wilmore's students was Fred Rogers, the renowned children's television educator and creator of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. Rogers had been taking classes at PTS part-time in the 1950s while working on a different television program, and became a full-time student from 1961 until his graduation with a Master of Divinity in 1963. He was ordained by the Presbytery of Pittsburgh that same year, in order to minister to children through mass media. His tenure as a full-time student exactly matched Wilmore's time teaching there. Wilmore may have also been part of the presbytery which ordained Rogers to his unique ministry. Robert Sullivan, "The Ministry of Mr. Rogers," *The New York Review of Books*, vol. LXVI, No. 1, January 17, 2019, pp. 21-23, p. 21; Lisa Jacobson, "Remembering Mr. Rogers," *Presbyterian Historical Society Blog*, February 11, 2013, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/remembering-mr-rogers>.

³⁵⁰ "I was so much involved in trying to get my coursework at Temple completed, and breaking in as a new teacher, that I did not get involved in social action causes in the Pittsburgh area, except, the Homewood Brushton Redevelopment Authority, which Lee and I got involved in, Lee did more in that than I did, which was really community organization. At the same time, LeRoy Patrick was involved in a number of things in the Presbytery, and we attended his church, so I was participating vicariously in LeRoy Patrick's ministry.... I had put the social activism of the Board of Christian Education years on the back shelf, so to speak, and had really started out in the direction of a scholarly career." Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

³⁵¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962).

³⁵² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 1.

³⁵³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 1.

³⁵⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 1. He said that "most laymen and ministers still consider social action to be the last and least significant item on their agenda." Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 2.

³⁵⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 2.

³⁵⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 2.

³⁵⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 2.

³⁵⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 3-4.

³⁶¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 4-5.

³⁶² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 5.

³⁶³ See "From this Vantage Point: A Note to Ministers About What to Say on the Sunday Before Election."

³⁶⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 5.

³⁶⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 5.

³⁶⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 6.

³⁶⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 6.

³⁶⁸ Walter H. Conser, Jr., and Robert J. Cain, *Presbyterians in North Carolina: Race, Politics, and Religious Identity in Historical Perspective* (Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2012), p. 195.

³⁶⁹ E. Brooks Holifield, *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1978), p. 154.

³⁷⁰ James Oscar Farmer, Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), p. 259.

³⁷¹ James Farmer suggests that Presbyterians “applied the doctrine inconsistently” and that had they been “in a position to impose their values on a government, as Calvin was,” they might not have used the “spirituality” doctrine. Farmer, *Metaphysical Confederacy*, p. 260.

Brooks Holifield agrees that proponents were inconsistent, for they “never truly abstained from social comment.” He describes the doctrine not as faithful theology but as “merely a protective gesture during the slavery controversy.” Holifield, *Gentlemen Theologians*, p. 154.

Farmer also credits practical motives, noting that while even Thornwell saw “logistical difficulties” in the doctrine, he “justified it as a way of avoiding division within the church.” Farmer, *Metaphysical Confederacy*, p. 259.

Conser agrees that the purpose of the doctrine was, at least in part, to enable the southern church to avoid having to address social injustice in the form of slavery. Conser, *Presbyterians in North Carolina*, p. 219.

³⁷² Conser, *Presbyterians in North Carolina*, p. 195.

³⁷³ Conser, *Presbyterians in North Carolina*, p. 195.

³⁷⁴ Ernest Trice Thompson, *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1961), pp. 7, 25, 41; D. G. Hart, *Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 54.

³⁷⁵ Thompson, *Spirituality of the Church*, p. 46. Farmer also argues that Calvinistic theology and John Calvin himself were relatively theocratic opponents of a separation of church and state. Farmer, *Metaphysical Confederacy*, p. 260.

³⁷⁶ Conser, *Presbyterians in North Carolina*, pp. xi, 219.

³⁷⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” ed. James M. Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), p. 299.

³⁷⁸ King, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” p. 299.

³⁷⁹ King, “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” p. 299.

³⁸⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 6.

³⁸¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 6-7.

³⁸² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 7.

³⁸³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 7.

³⁸⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 7.

³⁸⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 7.

³⁸⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 7-8.

³⁸⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 8.

³⁸⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 8-9.

³⁸⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 9.

³⁹⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 9.

³⁹¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 9-10.

³⁹² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 10.

³⁹³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 10.

³⁹⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 10. See also James Hudnut-Beumler’s discussion of Herberg’s book, as well as others in a similar vein by Gibson Winter and Peter Berger, in chapter 4 of his *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and Its Critics, 1945-1965* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

³⁹⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 10-11.

³⁹⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 12.

³⁹⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 13.

³⁹⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 13.

³⁹⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 15.

⁴⁰¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 14.

⁴⁰² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 15.

⁴⁰³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 16.

⁴⁰⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 15.

⁴⁰⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 16.

⁴⁰⁶ Compare his April 1958 quote: "... we are caught in a cultural trap, which in terms of its tyranny, its separation from its Judaeo-Christian sources, its inexorable power and inevitability, has all of the hallmarks of what the New Testament understands as the demonic. Like [the test pilot], we are all *going along for the ride*." Wilmore, Jr., "Social Responsibility and the World of McCabe," p. 7.

⁴⁰⁷ George D. Kelsey, "The Christian Way in Race Relations," *The Christian Way in Race Relations*, ed. William Stuart Nelson (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948), pp. 42-43.

⁴⁰⁸ Howard Thurman, "The Will to Segregation," *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), pp. 218-219. Essay originally published in 1943.

⁴⁰⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 25.

⁴¹⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 32.

⁴¹¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 17.

⁴¹² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 20.

⁴¹³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 21.

⁴¹⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 21.

⁴¹⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 21.

⁴¹⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 25.

⁴¹⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 26.

⁴¹⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 26.

⁴¹⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 26.

⁴²⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 28-29.

⁴²¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 35.

⁴²² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 35.

⁴²³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 53.

⁴²⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 57.

⁴²⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 59.

⁴²⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 57-58.

⁴²⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 58.

⁴²⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 59.

⁴²⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 59.

⁴³⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 62.

⁴³¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 64-65.

⁴³² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 64.

⁴³³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 65.

⁴³⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 65-66.

⁴³⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 68.

⁴³⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 69.

⁴³⁷ "Social Strategy for the Local Church," p. 11.

⁴³⁸ Wilmore, interview by the author, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.

⁴³⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 69.

⁴⁴⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 69.

⁴⁴¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 69.

⁴⁴² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 70.

⁴⁴³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 69.

⁴⁴⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 70.

⁴⁴⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 74.

⁴⁴⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 74.

⁴⁴⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 74.

⁴⁴⁸ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 75.

⁴⁴⁹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 76.

⁴⁵⁰ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 75.

⁴⁵¹ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 78.

⁴⁵² Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 78.

⁴⁵³ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 80.

⁴⁵⁴ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 83.

⁴⁵⁵ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 83.

⁴⁵⁶ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 84.

⁴⁵⁷ Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 86.

⁴⁵⁸ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.

⁴⁵⁹ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.

CHAPTER 3

“CATCHING UP WITH DR. KING”: THE COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE, 1963-65

Interracial Action Against Southern Injustices: Presbyterians in 1963

Putting the Church’s “Body and its Pocketbook Where its Mouth Was”: From Gradualism to the Commission on Religion and Race

In the 1952 to 1963 period, Gayraud Wilmore moved from local to regional to national activism - from Oxford and West Chester, to the Mid-Atlantic SCM and the Delaware Valley chapter of Christian Action, to the denomination’s national SEA offices and then, after an interlude in academia, to the helm of what was perhaps the most influential effort of any American Christian denomination in support of the Civil Rights Movement. This period also saw a shift in the denomination’s social strategies. The denomination had longstanding official commitments to seek a “non-segregated church in a non-segregated society,” though their pre-1963 racial justice activities largely consisted of issuing the official, non-binding pronouncements which SEA staff had worked to draft and interpret.¹ In this new era, the denomination shifted away from gradualist work (in the sense of moral suasion) of issuing social pronouncements and building trans-racial interpersonal relationships, to the decision to dedicate staff and funds to support more immediatist strategies (in the sense of applying economic and political pressure, rather than merely appealing to white consciences) of nonviolent direct action. This transition mirrored broader shifts in white and black Christian social/racial justice strategies from gradualism to immediatism, despite the fact that immediatist strategies had received national publicity as early as the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott. National public opinion in

general also shifted to support for the Civil Rights Movement in the early 1960s, including the Kennedy-Johnson administration's support for and passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts in 1964 and 1965, respectively.

In the spring of 1963, Wilmore was finishing his second year of teaching at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, the proudly segregationist George Wallace had just been elected governor of Alabama, and Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC had turned their focus to the Birmingham Campaign for racial justice. This campaign generated sympathetic national media coverage of peaceful demonstrators attacked by police officers, police dogs, and powerful water hoses, not to mention the jailing of King.² In response to criticism of his methods by local moderate white religious leaders, King issued his public response as the "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," in which he excoriated "the white moderate" as "the Negro's great stumbling block in the stride toward freedom," one "more devoted to 'order' than to justice," "who lives by the mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait until a 'more convenient season.'"³

Wilmore's Presbyterian denomination, known since 1958 as the United Presbyterian Church in the USA (UPCUSA) due to its merger with a smaller, Pennsylvania-centric denomination, the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPNA), was one of the largest and most influential majority-white mainline Protestant bodies in the United States at the time. These Presbyterians took King's criticisms to heart, and within weeks of the release of his "Letter," declared their intent to "catch up with Dr. King," becoming the first majority-white denomination to create a "Commission on Religion and Race" (CORAR).⁴ They also backed up these new promises with funds and staff - an initial budget of \$500,000, and a three-person staff

headed by an executive director, by the name of Gayraud S. Wilmore. According to Wilmore, “No Protestant denomination has delivered more vigorous verbal blows against the citadel of segregation” but now, the church had “put its body and its pocketbook where its mouth was.”⁵

The Creation of CORAR

Wilmore has credited several particular factors for the creation of CORAR: the leadership of the denomination’s Stated Clerk, Eugene Carson Blake; the influence of a January 1963 interfaith conference in Chicago on religion and race, the creation that same year of the NCC’s CORAR and its call for member churches to create their own such committees, and pressure from “a small black group” of Presbyterians from the (then disbanded) Council of the North and West.⁶ Blake identified the Birmingham Campaign as a turning point for him, personally, saying, “I decided that I just couldn’t stand for such behavior any longer... I was angry and went to the [May 1963] Des Moines General Assembly in that mood.”⁷ Kenneth G. Neigh, executive secretary of the Board of National Missions, attended the January 1963 Chicago conference, at which he and a colleague came up with the idea to creation several commissions on religion and race, for the NCC and major denominations.⁸ CORAR was the first such denominational commission.⁹

During that 1963 year, Edler G. Hawkins had become the first African American to make “a serious bid to be elected moderator” of the denomination’s General Assembly.¹⁰ Moderators were elected to a one-year term, and served as largely ceremonial leaders of the denomination, serving alongside the more permanent and significant position of Stated Clerk.¹¹ In preparation for that same Assembly, black Presbyterians were able, in part due to “insider politics,” to get the

denomination to extend a speaking invitation to Martin Luther King, Jr.¹² However, King was prevented from attending because Birmingham police had detained him in their city jail.¹³ Hence Presbyterians, even more than the rest of the nation, were primed to respond to the Birmingham Campaign. Hawkins spoke in King's stead at the Assembly.¹⁴ Bryant George recalled that speech:

It was the right speech at the right time by the right man. Edler, on that occasion, accomplished more than Dr. King or any angel from heaven could have accomplished with the highest judicatory of the denomination. His speech was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Edler, a known quantity to the church, an insider who knew how to draw on the best talent in the denomination for help, electrified the Assembly. He called on the church not just to open its eyes to the realities of required change, but to open its purse to bring about that change - a change, a turnabout, from some of the iniquity of the past to an unprecedented decision to fund the radical changes that would be required in the future.¹⁵

Hawkins lost his election as moderator by two votes.¹⁶ George, Hawkins' campaign manager, recalled many white commissioners (elected by regional presbyteries) telling him, "The Church is not ready for a Negro moderator."¹⁷ However, Hawkins was elected to that post in the following year, becoming the denomination's first black moderator.¹⁸ The creation of the Commission was partly a product of his strong yet unsuccessful 1963 campaign, and can be seen as something of a consolation prize in his defeat, and a valuable one at that.

Another product of Hawkins' campaign was the re-convening of the black Presbyterian caucus after its 1957 dissolution.¹⁹ George and Hawkins organized this new and "unabashedly political" group under the non-racial name, "Concerned Presbyterians," largely as a way to promote Hawkins' moderatorial candidacies in 1963 and 1964.²⁰ Also at the 1963 Des Moines G.A., a group of commissioners created the "Presbyterian Interracial Council" (PIC) as an interracial group supportive of racial justice.²¹ This organization, with "more than a thousand

members organized in twelve local chapters by the end of the first year,” was, like Concerned Presbyterians, critical in supporting Hawkins’ second moderatorial candidacy.²²

Wilmore’s Selection as Executive Director of CORAR

Why did this predominantly white church select Wilmore, who had an activist history and would later come to be seen as much more radical than the denomination as a whole, to lead its racial justice effort? One answer is that Wilmore had maintained a somewhat behind-the-scenes profile in the early 1960s. Second Presbyterian pastor Anderson Porter described Wilmore as a quiet, behind-the-scenes person, in comparison to himself and other West Chester activists, and CORAR staffer Oscar McCloud said that Wilmore was seen at that time as an academic rather than an activist.²³ McCloud suggested that if black Presbyterians had been able to choose the CORAR director themselves, they might have chosen someone like South Carolina pastor and Civil Rights activist J. Herbert Nelson I (father of the present-day Stated Clerk of the PC (USA), J. Herbert Nelson II), who was more of a firebrand activist, and an outspoken presence at annual General Assemblies.²⁴ At Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Wilmore “had put the social activism of [previous] years on the back shelf.”²⁵ He was too busy with the demands of teaching and doctoral study, not to mention family life, to be engaged in social action at that time. He was not even present at the 1963 Des Moines G.A. at which Edler Hawkins narrowly lost his first moderatorial campaign, and at which black Presbyterian political pressure helped force the creation of CORAR.²⁶

However, those who had paid closer attention to Wilmore’s career knew that he was not merely an a-political academic. White Presbyterians may not have been aware of Wilmore’s

activism in the Lincoln or West Chester days, as much pre-1954 Civil Rights activism was covered only in local newspapers and in the national black press. Many black Presbyterians, however, knew of these activities. Black Presbyterianism, especially non-southern black Presbyterianism, was a small world. While some black Presbyterian ministers were graduates of the independent Union Theological Seminary, most Northerners were products of Lincoln's seminary, and Southerners of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary (JCSTS) in Charlotte, North Carolina. Lincoln and JCSTS were the only historically black American Presbyterian seminaries until Lincoln's seminary closed in 1959. Many black Presbyterian laypeople were also graduates of or otherwise connected to Lincoln University. As previously noted, Lincoln alumni and professors included Presbyterian elders and ministers like Horace Mann Bond, Samuel G. Stevens, Frank T. Wilson, Sr., Jesse Belmont Barber, Maurice J. Moyer, Shelby Rooks, Milton A. Galamison, and James H. Robinson.

Furthermore, Wilmore had been involved in the Council of the North and West throughout the 1950s, so the key black Presbyterian leaders - included many of the above Lincolnians as well as others like Edler G. Hawkins - had known him for a long time and knew that he supported them.²⁷ Wilmore himself has made this point, saying of "northern black ministers" - he specifically mentioned Hawkins, Bryant George, LeRoy Patrick, and Robert Pierre Johnson -

Those men knew of my commitment to racial justice, and my commitment to them because I had attended meetings of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West. And had already identified myself with the movement of unrest within the black ministry of the North, that was on the verge of doing something to open the church up to a stronger commitment to racial justice. So when they came to me, in the classroom, as they did, to ask me to come to New York, they weren't coming to somebody they didn't know, or

somebody they thought was so much of an egghead that he probably wouldn't work out well, they were coming to somebody with whom they had been acquainted previously.²⁸

Wilmore was well-known among and a source of pride for both Lincolnians and members of the Council of the North and West - a double-valedictorian at Lincoln, brother of the famed Lincoln NAACP activist Jacques Wilmore, first black SEA staffer, and first black PTS professor. In 1959, Wilmore was also selected to become the only black member of the committee tasked with drafting a new creedal document for the denomination after its 1958 merger, the document which would become the "Confession of 1967" or "C67."

White Presbyterians knew Wilmore largely for his work in majority-white settings: the SEA, PTS, and the C67 drafting committee. These experiences, in addition to his SCM work, his interactions with white Presbyterians in West Chester, and his military service, had given Wilmore considerable experience working in majority-white settings. In addition to Anderson Porter's comments about Wilmore's style, Wilmore has expressed regret that he did not feel empowered to speak his mind more frequently on the C67 committee. Therefore white Presbyterian leaders may have seen him as an African American who could work collegially with white people and would not "rock the boat," unlike, in their eyes, the more outspoken black pastors from black congregations who came to G.A. every year pushing the church to take action on racial issues.

Black Presbyterians, however, knew that while Wilmore had spent a lot of time working with white people, his black roots ran deep - through the Council of the North and West, Lincoln University, and McDowell Community Presbyterian Church. They knew of his activist past and his loyalty to their networks. And even among those who might have preferred a more openly

militant J. Herbert Nelson I as Commission director, they were pleased enough with the creation of CORAR - under a black executive director - to accept Wilmore's appointment.

When Edler Hawkins approached Wilmore to ask if he would accept the CORAR position, Wilmore took the appointment "as a command from God."²⁹ Despite some hesitancy because of his doctoral studies, and Lee's reluctance to make such a sudden transition, Gayraud recalled that he "was raring to go... because all hell had broken out" and "the world of scholarship was crumbling around my ears anyway, in the face of the earthquake that was going on in American society over race."³⁰ He took a two-year leave-of-absence from his PTS professorship and set aside his position as a doctoral student at Temple, with "every anticipation of coming back to it after two years."³¹ However, Wilmore would never return to either position. Two years later, "we were right in the midst of it, and I couldn't go... back."³² Like Martin Luther King, Jr., who chose pastoral ministry and activism over academia after finishing his Ph.D., Wilmore had decided that "teaching the next generation of Presbyterian ministers and writing scholarly books had to wait."³³ The Wilmores moved to Princeton, New Jersey, and he began commuting to the the new CORAR's headquarters at the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside Drive in New York City.³⁴ Wilmore said,

I was assigned unprecedented direction of the most forthright effort of the white church to intersect with Dr. King... with broad powers to bring the denomination, kicking and screaming if necessary, into the vortex of the race relations storm by trying to erect a nonsegregated, multiethnic church in a segregated, white-dominated, highly secular society.³⁵

In addition to the "command from God" conveyed via the appeal of Hawkins, Wilmore has credited the reputation of Stated Clerk Eugene Carson Blake and a personal appeal from BNM executive Kenneth G. Neigh with convincing him to take the job.³⁶ Wilmore also signed

on with the expectation that Hawkins would win his second moderatorial campaign the following year.³⁷ Despite interning at his Labor Temple in New York and likely interfacing with him through both the Council of the North and West and the SEA, Wilmore was not closely familiar with Marshal L. Scott, the white man selected as chair of the new race commission.³⁸ However, Wilmore trusted Hawkins and knew that as moderator he would ensure adequate support and funding for Wilmore's work.³⁹ Hawkins served as vice chair (and later replaced Scott as chair) of the Commission, and "a stellar group of Black and white activists and intellectuals were brought on the Board," each of them anxious "to get the Presbyterian Church immediately involved in the movement [for racial justice]."⁴⁰

The Moderate Integrationism of Early CORAR Under Wilmore's Leadership

As Executive Director of CORAR, Wilmore was at the center of one of the earliest, most substantial efforts of a majority-white denomination to support Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. This 1963-65 phase of the movement involved integrationism, nonviolence, and transracial alliances with a clear role for white allies, unlike the late 1960s emphases on separatism, self-defense, and black consciousness. Wilmore's own understanding of social change and racial justice strategies do not seem to have differed markedly from those of other mainline denominational leaders during this early period. He later described the denomination's creation of CORAR as "the vanguard of the effort of American Protestantism to 'catch up with Dr. King.'"⁴¹ He said that CORAR's headquarters had felt as though it were "filled with the electricity of a war-time command center," as the place where "it was happening," "as if we were all on the cusp of a historic breakthrough in interracial and

interethnic relations, encouraged particularly by the ability of the religious establishment finally to exert effective power on the political, economic, and social structures of the society,” working as part of “a new adventure in which God was using us to awaken the sleeping giant that was the Church of Jesus Christ.”⁴² Little daylight was apparent here between Wilmore and white denominational leaders.

A February 1963 article on “Brotherhood Month” by Wilmore exemplified this moderate, integrationist stance.⁴³ It was published just a few months before the Birmingham Campaign and the creation of CORAR, thus reflecting Wilmore’s views in the twilight of his PTS professorship, and his public image just prior to black and white Presbyterians’ consideration of candidates for CORAR executive director. In it he criticized racial “division,” saying “that Christ... has broken down the dividing wall,” so that,

... we know that all other divisions of men are cancelled out, annulled by this ultimate reconciliation of Jew and Gentile, which Paul sees in the light of mankind’s ultimate reconciliation to God through Christ. This, then is the point: we Christians are brothers to every other human being....⁴⁴

He added that “we have no business to segregate ourselves, voluntarily or otherwise, from any man.”⁴⁵ He said,

... we break down barriers, destroy ghettos, scorn taboos. We will tolerate no Berlin walls between us, no lily-white suburbs, no anti-Roman crusades, no Jim Crow signs or Jewish quotas. God wills brotherhood, not separation. He wills us *to be together*.... There will be no separation in heaven. Separation itself is hell and we believe that Christ has overthrown hell forever.⁴⁶

This call for reconciliation, brotherhood, and integrationism mirrored white liberal stances at the time, and would bear little resemblance to Wilmore’s late 1960s views. This kind of stance also matched the trajectory of the Council of the North and West throughout the 1940s-1950s, with its

optimism, even naïveté about reliance on white Presbyterian allies, through the Council's shift away from referring to itself as "Afro-American," and its voluntary decision to disband in 1957. Again, according to LeRoy Patrick, they "were in a state of euphoria, a shameful confession for those to make who had studied under Niebuhr."⁴⁷ Edler G. Hawkins and James H. Robinson, who had risen from their days as founding pastors of black Presbyterian churches in New York City in the late 1930s Great Migration to become statesmen - perhaps the two most prominent African American Presbyterian leaders in the late 1950s and early 1960s - were both graduates of Niebuhr's Union Theological Seminary, as was Patrick.⁴⁸ Wilmore had been a disciple of Reinhold Niebuhr since his Christian Action days. This overly optimistic outlook also mirrored broader attitudes among many black racial justice activists in this period from the 1950s through the early 1960s, as indicated by NAACP Executive Secretary Walter White's argument, in response to the question put to him by a young Gayraud Wilmore in 1947, that "the Negro College should not exist" and that HBCUs represented "racial discrimination... abetted by Negroes themselves."⁴⁹

"The New Negro and the Church"

Another February 1963 article by Wilmore, this time in the more widely circulated *Christian Century*, struck some similar notes, though it also revealed some tensions with white moderates and foreshadowed later developments. In it, Wilmore voiced integrationist concerns. He noted the chasm between white and black churches, though not so much to lament this fact as to warn white Christians that they had work to do in communicating with black Christians.⁵⁰ He called black churches "ghettoized institutions," which, even when they are a part of majority-

white denominations like his own, “have a style of Christian life that is freighted with memory of the religious traditions of a rural southern past” and have “links with old homesteads and old friends, old hurts and old bitternesses which are continually being reforged....”⁵¹ Today, however, those churches have “a new sense of power in the war against racial discrimination.”⁵² This “new spirit of resistance” “has been coming to maturity in the Negro Christian community since New Deal days.⁵³ He noted the influence of King and of the black church on this “new Negro” phenomenon, and quoted from King’s *Stride Toward Freedom* about this new black “sense of dignity and destiny.”⁵⁴ Wilmore also pointed out that there were many participants in the movement for whom the church was not central, and said,

...even the new Negro who is a loyal churchman may not always be convinced that nonviolent resistance is the only Christian response to injustice; very likely he smiles to himself when Martin Luther King endorses the view that the Bible verse “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord’ might well be the motto of the Montgomery Improvement Association.”⁵⁵

Wilmore said that “we are witnessing the emergence of a Negro church which is seeking alliances with thousands of ‘new’ Negroes who have long wanted something from the church they have not heretofore been able to get - leadership and, in the broadest sense, political power.”⁵⁶ “...they want a church which has divested itself of moralistic complacency about the status quo and become a revolutionary force revealing the true religious significance of human life in a world where naked power is rampant.”⁵⁷ Despite his overall integrationist concerns about the challenges in white Christians’ communication with black Christians, Wilmore’s comments about the “new Negro’s” ambivalence about nonviolence and about the church, and their interest in “political power,” anticipated the Black Power movement, and also drew on Reinhold Niebuhr’s Christian realism.

Wilmore pointed out that many African Americans cared much more about whether white Christians sought a “nonsegregated society” than whether they sought a “nonsegregated church.”

...for many Negro intellectuals an even more serious indictment of the church than segregation in pew and pulpit is what seems to them to be white Christians’ timid acquiescence to, if not active participation in, discriminatory patterns of social and economic life in America and elsewhere. This is not only the primary reason for the black intellectual’s growing tendency to reject Christianity; it is also the cause of the increasing estrangement of the whole Negro Christian community from the white Christian community. If the white Protestant church does not more speedily enter the struggle in which the Negro is engaged, the psychological and ideological distance between the two communities may become so great as to prevent authentic integration for years after the merely spatial distance has been closed.⁵⁸

King, in his “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail,” released two months later, provided a similar critique of “The White Church” - the letter, of course, was addressed to seven white Birmingham clergymen and one rabbi.⁵⁹ He wrote,

I have been so greatly disappointed with the white church and its leadership.... I had the strange feeling... several years ago that we would have the support of the white church. I felt that the white ministers, priests and rabbis of the South would be some of our strongest allies. Instead, some have been outright opponents, refusing to understand the freedom movement and misrepresenting its leaders; all too many others have been more cautious than courageous and have remained silent behind the anesthetizing security of the stained-glass windows.... In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churches stand on the sideline and merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities.... So here we are moving toward the exit of the twentieth century with a religious community largely adjusted to the status quo, standing as a tail-light behind other community agencies rather than a headlight leading men to higher levels of justice.... The contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church’s silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are. But the judgment of God is upon the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early church, it will lose its authentic ring, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. I am meeting young people every day whose disappointment with the church has risen to outright disgust.⁶⁰

In a passage which anticipated a different section of King's "Letter," Wilmore continued,

This observation has no relation to the current fashion of holding the ax of black racism over the heads of white moderates and gradualists. It is unlikely that large numbers of what the late E. Franklin Frazier called "the black bourgeoisie" will rally to the cause of Malcolm X, Isaiah Poole and others calling for voluntary segregation on Negro terms. Nevertheless - and despite the denunciation of the Black Muslim movement by numbers of Negro clergymen - it is doubtful that middle class Negroes will expend much energy in opposing this antiassimilationist movement. Though the new Negro may temper his frustration by joining a protest movement, the source of that frustration remains. The Negro's full integration into American society is still remote, and with every small advance in one area there seems to be a retreat in another - whether because of indifference in his own ranks, structural impediments, or his opponent's employment of new and more subtle forms of resistance.⁶¹

Compare to King's "Letter," in which he said that he stood "in the middle of two opposing forces in the Negro community," one of complacent African Americans who either had "adjusted to segregation" or had become "insensitive to the problems of the masses" because of their middle class status, and another:

The other force is one of bitterness and hatred and comes perilously close to advocating violence. It is expressed in the various black nationalist groups that are springing up over the nation, the largest and best known being Elijah Muhammad's Muslim movement.... I have tried to stand between these two forces.... I'm grateful to God that, through the Negro church, the dimension of nonviolence entered our struggle. If this philosophy had not emerged, I am convinced that by now many streets of the South would be flowing with floods of blood. And I am further convinced that if our white brothers dismiss as "rabble rousers" and "outside agitators" those of us who are working through the channels of nonviolent direct action... millions of Negroes, out of frustration and despair, will seek solace and security in black nationalist ideologies, a development that will lead inevitably to a frightening racial nightmare.... If [the black person's] repressed emotions do not come out in these nonviolent ways, they will come out in ominous expressions of violence. This is not a threat; it is a fact of history.⁶²

The above passage by Wilmore evidenced his commonalities with three distinct groupings on the spectrum between militancy and moderation: the radicalism of Malcolm X, the moderation of the white mainline church leaders, and, in between the two, people like Martin Luther King, Jr., John

Lewis, and the other proponents of nonviolence within groups like the SCLC and SNCC.

Wilmore acknowledged the appeal of militancy and anticipated King's critiques of the "white moderate" and "the white church," yet nevertheless appeared to engage in this analysis out of a primary concern to prevent the "estrangement" of black and white Christians, and to enable "authentic" and "full" integration. His observation about "black racism" appeared to be an effort to distance his own analysis from the kind of rhetoric later used by King, who argued that if conditions did not improve, white people would have to deal not with black Christian moderates, but with radicals like Elijah Muhammad. Of course, Wilmore came quite close to that very line of thinking, which is why he felt a need to distance himself from it.

Wilmore also stated more directly African Americans' (including, perhaps, his own) frustration with the pace of change, ambivalence about integration, and interest in tangible political and economic power:

The fact is that the white community's continued rejection of the Negro makes the most spirited Negro crusader feel like a displaced person. He is no less frustrated than those among the Negro masses who give way to apathy and resignation. "New" Negroes may not overtly support the pseudo-Muslim and black racist groups, but many are ready to take what they can of the material fruits of desegregation while spurning cultural and religious integration. In Negro middle class circles one hears the cynical refrain: "The only thing we want from Mr. Charley is his money."⁶³

In a clear break from the old priorities of the denomination and its SEA staff, Wilmore said that while some progress has been made on that front, "it is doubtful that congregational desegregation should have highest priority in the strategy of Protestant Christians."⁶⁴ Recalling his critiques of the limitations of moral suasion and revivalism as social action strategies in his *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, and anticipating King's critique of white churches which

“merely mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities” and risk being “dismissed as an irrelevant social club,” he said,

To the extent that congregational life continues to revolve around platitudinous preaching, tired ritual and bland fellowship, racial integration in American Protestant churches will be irrelevant. Indeed, it might obscure the basic needs of both the Negro community as an alienated and exploited minority and the church as the agency through which God can address, judge and bless modern man in his life-situations.⁶⁵

Wilmore added,

...the church’s image will have to challenge the new Negro’s impression of the white Protestant as at best a condescending, paternalistic gradualist and at worst a vicious wielder of power who in the south opens White Citizens Council meetings with prayer and who in the north champions conservative Republicanism. In short, the image Protestantism must somehow convey to the new Negro is that of a revolutionary force committed to distinguishing and separating the Christian understanding of life from the idealizations and norms of middle class white society. This is what the new Negro wants from the church.⁶⁶

This quote, again, anticipated King’s critique of the “white moderate,” echoed King’s and John Lewis’ critiques of right-wing elements in both major political parties, and used the rhetoric of “revolution,” which would appear again in John Lewis’ speech at the March on Washington later that summer, to the consternation of moderate white allies.⁶⁷ Wilmore’s reference to “revolution,” however, despite its radical overtones, also invested a surprising amount of hope in the Protestant church.

He noted African American interests in economic advancement and awareness of black liberation on a global scale,

To want Mr. Charley’s money is to want his real estate and automobiles, but more than that, it is to covet the power, dignity and self-determination which - or so our society has taught us - money buys. These assets have largely been denied to Negroes, and there is no reason to assume that they will be bestowed upon them by white people. This sober realization, coupled with knowledge of what it means to be black in and excitement over

what is happening in Africa, has given to the Negro a sense of solidarity more potent than the drive for personal aggrandizement.⁶⁸

1960 was known as “the Year of Africa,” because during that year seventeen formerly colonized African nations gained independence.⁶⁹ Eight more had been liberated during the 1950s and another eight were liberated during John F. Kennedy’s 1961-63 presidency.⁷⁰ As Wilmore pointed out, African Americans - especially those black Presbyterians who shared an alma mater with Ghanaian President and Lincoln alumn Kwame Nkrumah - were paying attention to these developments, and wondering when they, too, would be liberated from their situation of internal colonialism.

While the Negro’s yearnings for material goods and the symbols of affluence will persist, they will not mitigate the growing sense of social and political solidarity with black people throughout the world. The real heroes of the American Negro in 1963 are not the Ralph Bunches and the Willie Mayses - though they are justly admired still - but the Martin Luther Kings, the Tom Mboyas [of Kenya] and the Kwame Nkrumahs.⁷¹

Finally, Wilmore sketched out his surprisingly high hopes for how the “white moderate” might turn out to be a helpful ally after all, making the church into the “revolutionary force” mentioned above:

Whether the predominantly white Protestant churches can capture the imagination and loyalty of the new Negro may depend on whether a counterpart movement can arise within those churches - that is to say, whether that part of the white Protestant intelligentsia which has become disenchanted with middle class complacency and moralism can marshal sufficient resistance to the old ways to change the image of white Christianity. In the student Christian movement, in lay academies and renewal groups, among missionaries, staff members of inner city churches and some of the younger clergy, there are signs which suggest that a new kind of white Protestant is no more unthinkable than a new kind of Negro Protestant.⁷²

On a personal, relational level, Wilmore’s solidarity with white leaders was ambiguous.

He had aligned himself closely with some white allies, such as white Quakers and other

neighbors at Tanguy Homesteads and in West Chester, and colleagues in the SCM, SEA, and CORAR. However, at times Wilmore demonstrated greater faith in his relationships with African Americans, as in his networking with black Presbyterians like Jesse Belmont Barber and Frank T. Wilson, Sr., his studies under George Kelsey at Drew, his association with Eugene Turner at Pittsburgh, and his reliance on the support of Edler Hawkins in the founding of CORAR. Many of these associations were of course necessitated by the lack of white alternatives - black people were the key decision-makers and recruiters for his jobs at Second Presbyterian, the SCM, the SEA, and CORAR. White professors were unlikely to take on a black doctoral student, and Wilmore's white PTS students do not appear to have embraced him. Wilmore knew how to get along with white people in professional situations, and knew that alliances with them were often necessary, but he had also learned that black people were more likely than white people to stick their necks out for him and for one another. In this vein of black solidarity, Wilmore recalled that he was disappointed that the NCC had selected a young white pastor, Robert Spike, as executive director of its own CORAR, passing over J. Oscar Lee, the longtime and sole African American NCC staffer.⁷³ However, Wilmore also expressed satisfaction that his own denomination had selected a black executive director in himself, along with Hawkins as vice-chair and eventual chair, and "well-known black Presbyterian leaders" as most of its membership.⁷⁴ This satisfaction reflected Wilmore's trust in black allies, but it also indicated his appreciation of white Presbyterians' relative willingness to empower black leaders.



Figure 12. Hosea L. Williams, Gayraud S. Wilmore, and Andrew Young (standing); Ralph David Abernathy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, and Bayard Rustin (seated), 1963.

“Hosea L. Williams, Gayraud S. Wilmore, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Coretta Scott King,” 1963, United Presbyterian Church in the USA Commission on Religion and Race - Archives, RG 301.9, Box 14, Folder 58, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

The Early Work of CORAR: Northern White Presbyterians in Mississippi

Wilmore said that CORAR “was given unprecedented leadership and authority to turn the United Presbyterian Church into a virtual civil rights movement” and that it “played the role of encouraging, financing, and advising the church’s involvement in a maelstrom of Christian social action.”⁷⁵ He contended that his denomination, through CORAR and other ventures, contributed “the lion’s share” of all Protestant church investments in racial justice from 1963 to 1970.⁷⁶ The denomination designated \$500,000 (about \$4.2 million in today’s dollars) for the Commission’s work during an initial three-year period.⁷⁷ Wilmore estimated that during his tenure, the denomination spent more than ten million dollars (about \$84 million today) on the work of his Commission.⁷⁸ CORAR passed some of that money on to other groups like the SCLC, SNCC, and the NCC’s CORAR, and some of it to smaller local, grassroots efforts.⁷⁹ In its first four years CORAR promoted voter registration, provided funds to embattled black clergy, lobbied and promoted letter-writing in support of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts of 1964-65, worked with Yaqui Indians in Arizona, and began conversations with Spanish-speaking Presbyterians.⁸⁰ Wilmore also participated in many of the major events of the Civil Rights Movement, including the March on Washington (MOW), the Selma-to-Montgomery march, the Memphis-to-Jackson march, and the Watts Rebellion.⁸¹

We maintained a fairly low profile as far as the marches were concerned. I think Andy Young knew that we were there, and was sort of our contact person. But our people were never in the limelight so to speak, we weren’t at the head of the marches, nor did we participate in the evening meetings, I did on one or two occasions with Dr. King and the cadre of SCLC leaders that met with him in the evening, but for the most part Presbyterian ministers and laypeople, but mostly ministers, who participated in those marches were not conspicuous by their presence.... but, the marches were an important part of that whole drive in the South, because it provided camaraderie and a sense of

community, people got to know one another, I think it was a very important part of that whole experience.⁸²

One march participant, Tom Michael, the young white co-pastor of a Presbyterian church in Yonkers, New York, recalled some of the people with whom he and Wilmore brushed shoulders in the demonstrations, in this case referring to the day of the Selma-to-Montgomery march.⁸³

After breakfast we waited around the grounds for the march to begin. I happened to meet up with Dr. Gayraud Wilmore, whom I had met when he attended a Presbytery meeting to inform us of his work as executive secretary of the United Presbyterian Commission on Religion and Race. He was accompanied by the Rev. Metz Rollins, who was a field director for the United Presbyterian Board of Christian Education. As we were chatting, a white southerner walked up and was greeted by these two. They introduced me to him. His name was Myles Horton, founder of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee.... While we were talking, a man joined us, and he was introduced to me as Charles Evers, brother of the slain civil rights worker Medgar Evers.⁸⁴

CORAR's top priority in those early years was the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project (HMP).⁸⁵ This project, begun in the summer of 1964, involved CORAR's recruitment of Presbyterian ministers, from the North, like Tom Michael, to travel to Mississippi to participate in voter registration drives, picketing, teaching in freedom schools, and other actions in support of local black activists.⁸⁶ The HMP was headquartered across the street from the offices of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO - joint Mississippi offices of the NAACP, SCLC, SNCC, and CORE), and worked closely with COFO.⁸⁷ This is where Wilmore first met James Forman.⁸⁸

The Hattiesburg Ministers' Project was notable in that it involved predominantly white male ministers from outside the South, serving, for the most part, under a white CORAR staffer, working closely with COFO leaders like Forman, Bob Moses, Stokely Carmichael, and H. Rap Brown.⁸⁹ Foreign missionaries who were home on furlough also participated, joined by the top

denominational missions official, John Coventry Smith.⁹⁰ Wilmore recalled that ten to fifteen ministers would come to Hattiesburg at a time, usually for a period of one to three weeks.⁹¹

Approximately 400 ministers came to Hattiesburg to participate in the project.⁹² Sometimes these ministers did not communicate with their families and/or home churches about these visits.

But Presbyterian ministers were coming from all over the country, to Hattiesburg. They were not telling their sessions [comprised of elders in their home churches] that they were going. I used to get telephone calls in the middle of the night from wives of ministers saying “my husband had left and packed his bag and is down there with you and he didn’t say goodbye, and I don’t know where he is and my children are worried about him, what are you doing to our father and husband” . . . many of them reported that they got no encouragement from the leaders of their churches and they said finally to some of them, informally, “I’m going. And you can tell the rest of them, ‘I cannot stay here any longer, I’m needed there, our church is there, we’re trying to bear witness to those people, and I believe that’s where the Lord wants me to be.’”⁹³

Some of these men were jailed as a result of their protests.

I can’t recall the names but everywhere I go now, I will run into somebody, on occasion, not every church, but somebody’ll walk up to me and say you don’t remember me, but I was in jail down in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, as a result of joining you and that project we had down there. . . . That was a trying time because I think we had nine men under indictment, for breaking city ordinance in a picket line. I was in that line. I stepped outside of it in order to be the one to negotiate, and the men went to jail, and it was a very unpleasant kind of experience for their churches back home to realize that their pastor was a jailbird. And we got a lot of flak from that. But you know, the church stood firmly on that. I think COCAR could have gone down the drain right at that time, but the church stood firmly, that is to say the boards and agencies did.⁹⁴

Of course, these ministers faced potentially worse consequences, as made clear by the June 1964 murders of black Mississippian James Chaney and white New Yorkers Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner in June 1964 - the beginning of the HMP’s inaugural summer. These three men had been working to register voters with CORE and COFO.⁹⁵

Wilmore reflected on the psychological profile of the “outside agitator” white ministers he and CORAR hosted in Hattiesburg, often to the chagrin of their home congregations.

I think maybe a quarter of them...maybe a third [of these ministers had been involved in racial justice issues back home], but two-thirds had not. And therein lies the source of their problem, because many of them surprised their congregations with their aggressiveness, after years of passivity on the race question and all of a sudden, boom, they go through the ceiling with this desire to martyr themselves in the South.⁹⁶

Wilmore also recalled,

...I used to talk to those men about their motivation for coming, and there again, I recognized in them the same kinds of sentiments and feelings that were going through the souls of John Coventry Smith and Bill Morrison and Ken Neigh, a desire to, for once, stand forth as a white Christian, in a way that they could be proud of, in terms of their commitment to justice.⁹⁷

These observations reflect the predicament of white Presbyterians in response to King's skewering of the "white moderate" in his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Many of these white ministers had long held progressive positions on racial justice, but had done little to back those words up with action. Also, the fact that the denomination, like these white ministers, was largely based outside the South, meant that it was more comfortable for the denomination and its ministers to attack racial injustice in the South, treating the South like a foreign mission field.

Wilmore made this analogy himself.

I would never have admitted it in those days, because there was a lot of criticism of the northern liberals, reminiscent of the criticism of the missionaries who went south during the Civil War and followed the Union troops, and during the Radical Reconstruction, you know, same kind of criticism. But some of it was correct.⁹⁸

A focus on the South allowed the denomination the distance it needed to engage in the Civil Rights Movement. However, once the movement shifted its focus back to the North and West in the second half of the 1960s, white Presbyterians' enthusiasm for the movement would wane.

These white ministers who surreptitiously left their wives and congregations after little involvement in racial justice, in order to "martyr themselves in the South," were a microcosm of

the sentiments of the denomination at the time, and of northern white mainline/moderate Christians in general. Wilmore did note that it was helpful for these ministers to have this kind of experience, as a way to encourage them to begin or increase their involvement in racial justice back home.

I thought it was significant because it was an on-the-field experience for Presbyterian ministers who were talking about this racial crisis from their pulpits without any personal experience of what it was like, and this gave them that kind of personal background experience, many of them went on to become very prominent in the struggle in their own communities.⁹⁹

Black Presbyterian ministers were less involved than white ministers in the Hattiesburg Project, largely for two reasons. First, their churches did not have the resources to send them to Mississippi. Second, many of these men were already involved in racial justice activism in their home churches and cities, and so did not have the time or psychological need to travel to Mississippi to engage in similar work.¹⁰⁰

Gender dynamics among the demonstrators in the South were a source of concern for Wilmore, in terms of the presence of these impulsive northern ministers, and, along with sexual and class dynamics, in relation to the presence of women activists, contributing to what Wilmore described as sense of “disorderliness.”¹⁰¹ He said,

I recall how wild and woolly that whole atmosphere and involvement was in the rallies and marches in the South, that is to say you had people footloose and fancy free. One of the things I recall so vividly is the spectacle of highly educated wealthy white girls from Vassar, and Smith, Wellesley, Bryn Mawr, throwing themselves at black sons of sharecroppers and tenant farmers who could barely speak English, who were dirty, unkempt, ignorant, while they would not even speak or have anything to do with well-educated young black men from their same schools or other schools in the North who were there trying to do the same thing they wanted then. There was that enticement to the savagery of lower-class blacks, that had all the sexual overtones that D. H. Lawrence puts into the gamekeeper and... *Lady Chatterly's Lover*...¹⁰²



Figure 13. Participants in the Hattiesburg Ministers' Project protesting in that city, 1964.

“Hattiesburg race effort continuing,” photograph by George Bollis, 1964, *Religious News Service*, Religious News Service - Archives, RNS RG 1, RT 1040, Image no. 31238, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

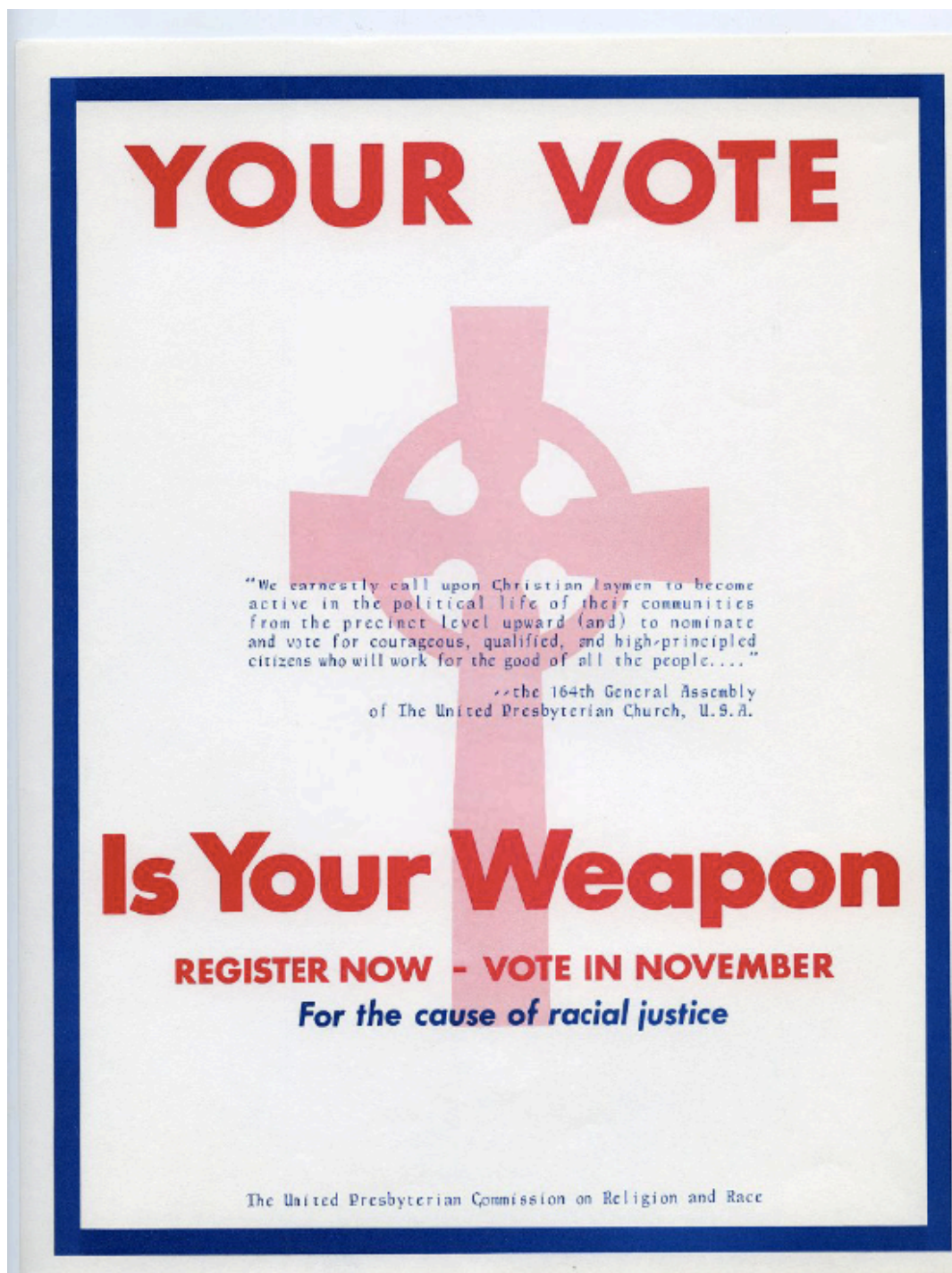


Figure 14. CORAR voter registration promotion leaflet, 1964.

“Voter registration promotion leaflet,” 1964, United Presbyterian Church in the USA Commission on Religion and Race - Archives, RG 301.9, Box 10, Folder 12, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

This D. H. Lawrence novel involves an affair between an upper-class woman and a lower-class man. Even though Wilmore raised concerns about the northern ministers in Hattiesburg, he may have felt most comfortable working and socializing with other men in the South. For example, another black Presbyterian man who would become one of Wilmore's coworkers and closest lifelong friends after he joined CORAR's staff in the late 1960s, Oscar McCloud, in order to illustrate Wilmore's generous, friendly spirit, described a moment when he, Wilmore, and James Forman were relaxing together during a break from their civil rights work in Mississippi. Forman asked to share Wilmore's pipe, and to McCloud's surprise, Wilmore handed it to Forman without hesitating.¹⁰³ However, Wilmore would certainly also have worked with female activists, including northern white women like Viola Liuzzo. Liuzzo, a 39-year-old activist from Michigan, left her husband and children to travel to participate in the Selma demonstrations. She was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan while shuttling fellow activists back to Selma the evening after the Selma-to-Montgomery march.¹⁰⁴ Wilmore said that Metz Rollins knew Liuzzo, and that Wilmore himself "saw her that night she was killed."¹⁰⁵

The South was a violent place at the time, as the examples of Liuzzo, as well as Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, demonstrate, so activists had to take that into consideration and look out for each other. But sometimes such concerns had a patriarchal overtone. Wilmore said,

I recall the Selma march, Andrew Young coming to me, and I've reminded Andy of this since, asking me to look out for his wife, because he had to be up there with Dr. King, and I looked out for her, we walked together for quite a few miles, and I reminded him of that when he came to Rochester a few years ago. I said, "you trusted me with your wife, [inaudible]." He said, "well I knew I could trust you, I couldn't trust some of those other people...[laughter]."¹⁰⁶

Wilmore also had some brushes of his own with violence in the South.

I think I was more fearful in the South than I was anywhere, because I came out of the ghetto of the North and I knew how to operate in those situations. I was not really familiar with Mississippi and Georgia and Alabama, I felt a little uneasy there, especially when I discovered that, in Hattiesburg for example, there was a determined effort on the part of the whites to break up the Ministers' Project, and I remember having to get out of town, chased, practically chased out of town by some whites in a pickup truck, who were driving around our headquarters all the time and just looking for opportunities to make trouble with some of the ministers who were coming in and out, going in and out of that project. That was a little frightening and I think my wife was more concerned about me at that time than any other time.¹⁰⁷

Wilmore had a similar experience on the evening of the conclusion of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, while he, like Viola Liuzzo, was transporting protestors by car.¹⁰⁸ As previously noted, Wilmore remembered encountering Liuzzo that night. Perhaps this encounter occurred as drivers coordinated their activities. According to Tom Michael, after the conclusion of the march and the final speech by King in Montgomery,

Then we began the trek to return to our homes. We were told to go to what they called the colored section of the city, to the right of the statehouse. I was struck by the irony that I, a white man, should feel a sense of relief when I crossed into the ghetto. I found Gay Wilmore. He had rented a full sized Buick sedan and was planning to drive to the Atlanta airport with Metz Rollins. I figured that the airport in Montgomery would be chaotic, so I asked to ride with him. My seminary classmate joined us, and a young man from the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee. He looked fierce with a black beard and dreadlocks, but he was in fact a most gentle young man.

So there we were, three Black men and two white men. We struck out on Interstate 85 toward Atlanta. After a while we needed to get gas and make a pit stop. Gay and Metz peered intently at each service station, asking, "Is that one?" This was another thing I learned. It is one thing to hear about segregated facilities in the South, and it was another to actually experience it. Here were two prominent, highly educated clergy reduced to the humiliation of having to bypass facilities that would refuse to serve them because of their race.¹⁰⁹

Finally, we found a station that would serve us. For my part, I was not able to tell the difference, but they had lived a lifetime of picking up the subtle clues about where they could be served. After we had finished, Gay Wilmore announced that he was sleepy, and would someone else drive. I was the only one who had my driver's license, so I took the wheel. At that time the speed limit on highways was 55 miles an hour, and I was

observing the speed limit. As I drove along, a string of cars passed us by traveling faster. Then an unmarked state trooper whizzed past and pulled over eight or ten speeders. I drove carefully on the outside lane at 55.

Gay Wilmore said to me, “OK, Tom, if a trooper pulls you over for speeding, just tell him ‘I’m just trying to get these (he used the N word) out of here as fast as I can.’” I guess it was a form of gallows humor. After we left the interstate we traveled in the darkness through small towns in Georgia.

I carefully observed every speed limit sign, I came to full stops at stop signs, and if a traffic light even hinted that it was turning red, I stopped. Since that time I have observed speed limits and stop signs. You will never catch me traveling more than the speed limit anywhere.

At long last, late in the night, we saw the towers of Atlanta glowing in the distance. It reminded me of the experience when Dorothy and her friends first caught sight of the Emerald City of Oz.

At the airport we took our leave of one another as we boarded our airplanes. Gay Wilmore saluted me in the manner of a French general, kissing me on both cheeks.¹¹⁰

CORAR Co-Workers: Bob Stone and Metz Rollins

Wilmore led CORAR from 1963 to 1972. On the Commission’s staff, Wilmore worked closely with two other staffers who were also ministers, J. Metz Rollins, Jr. (who had traveled with Wilmore and Tom Michael from Montgomery to Atlanta), and Robert J. Stone.¹¹¹ Despite an initial division of regional responsibilities - Rollins for the South, Stone for the Midwest, and Wilmore for the West Coast - Stone, a white New York minister and associate of Edler Hawkins’, ended up focusing on the Hattiesburg Ministers’ Project.¹¹² Wilmore and Stone did not get along. The cause of the tension between the two is somewhat unclear, but eventually amounted to Wilmore’s concerns that Stone, as a white clergyman, was undermining his leadership.¹¹³ Wilmore said that he “never felt that Bob was totally loyal to me.”¹¹⁴ He would not have hired

Stone himself.¹¹⁵ However, Stone had played a major role in Hawkins' 1963 moderatorial campaign, so, according to Wilmore "Edler forced Bob on to me" because "Edler owed Bob something."¹¹⁶ In the end, Wilmore fired Stone, and these tensions, in addition to the fact that the Hattiesburg Project "was too large and exposed for one denomination," led to the transfer of responsibility for the Project to the NCC in the summer of 1965.¹¹⁷ Wilmore would later relate these tensions to his prior conflicts in West Chester, saying that his experience of (perhaps) being maligned by the elder Bob Boell had prepared him to deal with Bob Stone, having made him "leery of white clergy who presumed to know more about black people than we knew about ourselves."¹¹⁸

Wilmore had a much better relationship with Metz Rollins. Joseph Metz Rollins, Jr. was a Newport News, Virginia native, son of the pastor of one of the largest black Presbyterian churches in Virginia, a graduate of Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and by 1963 was already a well-established Civil Rights activist.¹¹⁹ While serving as minister at Trinity Presbyterian in Tallahassee, Florida, Rollins had been involved in the 1956 Tallahassee Bus Boycott, serving as treasurer for the organization leading the boycott.¹²⁰ Trinity Presbyterian was affiliated with the PC (US), and as a result of his activities, the Florida Presbytery removed him from his pulpit, and he had to work instead as a hospital orderly.¹²¹ His congregation left the PC (US) and joined Wilmore's denomination as Trinity United Presbyterian.¹²² Rollins was also a former SEA coworker of Wilmore's. Beginning in 1958, Rollins and Jack Marion had served as a special SEA field representatives, based out of Nashville, Tennessee. They traveled throughout the South, where they "counseled churches and pastors and assisted in setting up programs of Christian action," an effort which was something of a "forerunner" to CORAR.¹²³ Rollins also

served as Vice President of the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (an SCLC branch), and he had participated in the Freedom Rides, during which he was arrested in Jackson, Mississippi in 1961.¹²⁴

Rollins' background as a Southerner and his activist experience were invaluable to CORAR. According to Wilmore,

Metz had been on the firing line in Tallahassee and in Nashville. He knew the leadership of SCLC. He knew the tactics of nonviolent direct action. So he was, he brought to the table, so to speak, activist orientation and strategies, and tactics, which I didn't have. And would not have thought of, except, in imitation of, you know, what was being reported in the newspapers, but Metz had been there. I think he had his head beat in or something in Nashville by that time. So he played a very important role, I think, in getting us from behind the desks and out into the field, and he played a important role in introducing me to some of the activists in the movement in the South.¹²⁵

Indeed, Rollins, had been "struck in the head by a rock" during a 1963 Nashville protest.¹²⁶

Wilmore, of course, had been involved in nonviolent direct action in Oxford, Pennsylvania, but those experiences had occurred above the Mason-Dixon line, thirteen years previously, and in a less developed manner in terms of theory and strategy than what the Tallahassee, Nashville, and SCLC activists had since developed. Rollins relied on his activist credibility to keep more militant elements in the movement in check, as in the case of the Selma-to-Montgomery march, according to Wilmore.

Metz had a very strategic position at that march because Dr. King and leadership had invited him to be responsible for holding the SNCC group together in some kind of orderly way at Selma, because they were threatening to revolt, and he had some credibility among them.... They knew him and he knew them, and he was successful I think in maintaining some discipline among them right straight through to the end. And it was difficult because they were threatening to break out of Selma and interrupt the march before it got into [Montgomery], with a demand for a more aggressive leadership than King was giving at the time.¹²⁷

Rollins would later work closely with Wilmore in developing the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), and in 1972 would succeed Edler Hawkins as pastor of St. Augustine's Church, serving there until his 2005 retirement.¹²⁸

Cracks in the Foundation: the March on Washington, "The Negro Revolt," and the Confession of 1967

Generational Tensions at the March on Washington

United Presbyterians had turned a corner. Their support for racial justice remained moderate and incrementalist, yet was now a bit more activist, largely as a result of the prodding of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the SCLC, and his Presbyterian equivalents like Edler Hawkins and "Concerned Presbyterians." Wilmore, like many other black racial justice activists at the time, welcomed these changes, and was willing to make some concessions for the sake of a promising new alliance with white leaders like Eugene Carson Blake, Marshal L. Scott, Kenneth G. Neigh, and Wilmore's old colleagues from the SEA. However, this was an uneasy alliance, for there were several cracks in its foundation. One of the earliest such cracks to appear, at least for Wilmore at a personal level, did so at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (MOW) in August 1963, only weeks into Wilmore's tenure as CORAR director, one day after the organization's first staff meeting.¹²⁹

Eugene Carson Blake, Stated Clerk and thus top official for the United Presbyterians, was scheduled to speak at the event as a representative of the National Council of Churches and as the spokesperson for "Protestantism," and white mainline Protestantism in particular.¹³⁰ A month previously, Blake had been arrested during a Fourth-of-July CORE demonstration to

desegregate Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Baltimore, Maryland.¹³¹ During that summer, prior to the appointment of Wilmore and Scott as executive director and chairman, respectively, of CORAR, Jon L. Regier and Blake temporarily filled those roles.¹³² Regier had casually mentioned this upcoming demonstration to Blake as the latter was on his way to a press conference to promote the new CORAR.¹³³ At the conference, Blake said that CORAR would take the denomination beyond mere words, saying, “Now is the time for action.”¹³⁴ *New York Times* reporter George Dugan responded by asking, “Name one thing that you plan to do.”¹³⁵ Blake was not prepared to answer this question. He recalled, “I didn’t want to have egg on my face, so all I could think of was the demonstration down in Baltimore. So I said we were considering going down there.”¹³⁶ Blake attended and was arrested at the demonstration along with several other leaders, including Furman Templeton, a black Presbyterian elder, vice chairman of CORAR, and leader of Baltimore’s chapter of the Urban League.¹³⁷ According to historian Douglas Brackenridge, “Because of national and international publicity, Blake and his colleagues became a symbol of a new phase of racial involvement. Members of the ecclesiastical establishment had at last placed their bodies and reputations on the line for social justice.”¹³⁸ Blake “was the first mainline Protestant executive to step out from the security of high office to put into practice what the church in theory had been proclaiming.”¹³⁹ Wilmore would later recall of Blake,

I always had the feeling that Gene Blake, and I would say this about some of our other officials, had come to a decision in his own heart and soul that if there ever was a time when he had to stand forth like a Christian, this was the time. I think they were willing to risk something. One could not help but admire Martin Luther King, Jr. as a kind of prototype of what a contemporary Christian minister ought to be. And I think these men longed themselves for that image of themselves, and were willing, if necessary, to make certain sacrifices to see that that happened. They thought of themselves therefore in

somewhat heroic terms, Gene Blake, particularly. He had a sense of heroism, a sense of almost martyrdom, of making a sacrifice, of shocking the nation into realization that Christians could still witness and suffer for the truth, if God so willed it, and so I think he went willingly into that situation, and perhaps happily, knowing that it would have reverberations that would be extremely important for the church's witness.¹⁴⁰

Bryant George, who earlier that year had been Edler Hawkins' moderatorial campaign manager and had worked with Hawkins to found Concerned Presbyterians, was a staffer for the Board of National Missions whose offices, like CORAR's, were housed at the Interchurch Center. On the morning of the MOW, George drove the denomination's top officials from New York to Washington, including Blake, John Coventry Smith, William Morrison, and Kenneth Neigh.¹⁴¹ Since Wilmore lived in Princeton, he decided to travel to Washington on his own and meet the other officials there. Wilmore later regretted this decision.

I never caught up with Dr. George and his elite delegation but spent my time wandering around the Lincoln Memorial alone, critiquing to myself the boring and repetitive speechifying. I guess at the same time Bryant and the others were looking for me - the head of their new race relations program - until they became totally mesmerized by the extravagant rhetoric of the numerous speakers leading up to King's climactic "I Have a Dream."¹⁴²

This circumstance was coincidental, and Wilmore's 2012 retelling of it is was quite after-the-fact, but even so, it reflected the sense that from the beginning Wilmore felt somewhat isolated from other, especially white, United Presbyterian leaders. In Blake's address, he admitted that (white mainline) Protestants were latecomers to the Civil Rights cause, but pledged their support from that point forward.¹⁴³ Wilmore recalled that Blake spoke,

...at the beginning of the program, an enviable position for a white cleric so unfamiliar to tens of thousands in the massive audience - and to most of the twelve or thirteen speakers who followed him. We Presbyterians were thrilled to have our most prominent minister pledge the unflagging partnership of the Christian churches of America with Dr. King's great campaign for jobs and freedom, but I couldn't help feeling, as I stood on tip toes in that teeming mass of humanity, that Blake had missed a golden opportunity to set the

record straight. He should have said that the white churches were making a belated appearance, but that the black churches of America began the struggle for black liberation in the eighteenth century! That throughout the cruel and weary years they had never forsaken the cause! Petitions and agitation for basic justice and civil rights have always been the signature of African-American Christians, ever since Richard Allen and Absalom Jones created the first independent black congregations in Philadelphia and laid the foundation for the bully pulpit upon which King, Abernathy, and thousands of other black preachers mounted in the years since.¹⁴⁴

Wilmore would not focus his own writing on black Christian history until his 1972 *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, but his Lincoln professors Andrew Murray, David Swift, and Jesse Belmont Barber published on the subject as well, and he himself had been a part of a socially-engaged black Christianity as a child in Philadelphia, and as a member of the Council of the North and West. Wilmore recalled that he had intended to correct Blake upon their return to New York the next day, but, “Instead I failed to speak out.”¹⁴⁵

This might seem like a minor incident. However, Gary Gerstle does identify conflict at the MOW over the censorship of another young activist, John Lewis, as the beginning of a split between moderate white and radical black Civil Rights leadership.¹⁴⁶ Lewis had been elected chairman of SNCC only two months before the MOW, so he, like Wilmore, was new to his leadership role.¹⁴⁷ Lewis was scheduled to speak at the MOW, and, in consultation with fellow SNCC leader James Forman, included a line in his draft which read,

We will march through the South, through the heart of Dixie, the way Sherman did. We shall pursue our own “scorched earth” policy and burn Jim Crow to the ground, nonviolently. We shall crack the South into a thousand pieces and put them back together in the image of a democracy.¹⁴⁸

However, other leaders, especially Eugene Carson Blake, censored the speech, forcing Lewis to remove this and other passages.¹⁴⁹



Figure 15. Eugene Carson Blake, being arrested and escorted into a police van as part of a protest of segregated facilities at the Gwynn Oak Amusement Park, Baltimore, Maryland, July 4, 1963.

“Eugene Carson Blake arrested,” photograph by James E. Curry and United Press International, 1963, Religious News Service - Archives, RNS RG 1, RT 1040, Image no. 29572, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Both Wilmore and Lewis, therefore, found themselves in disagreement with Blake at the MOW. In both cases, the more strident, younger African Americans, new to leadership posts, deferred to Blake and “the white moderate,” tabling their objections. Even these tensions, especially in the case of John Lewis, again underscored the alliance between African Americans and non-southern whites: the source of disagreement was not over *whether* the white South was the source of the race problem; rather, leaders disagreed over just *how harshly* to criticize the white South. This fragile alliance would collapse later in the decade when black leaders broadened their criticisms to include Northerners as well.¹⁵⁰

Blake’s words and actions at the Baltimore demonstration and the MOW, including his censorship of John Lewis, revealed a blend of courage, pride, repentance, and paternalism. Wilmore himself portrayed Blake and his fellow white Presbyterian leaders as both courageous and paternalistic. He described the four white men atop the United Presbyterian hierarchy, the same men whom Bryant George had transported to the MOW - Blake, Smith, Morrison, and Neigh - as “involved in almost every policy-making meeting, committee or commission, subgroup, that was making a decision about the posture, and strategy of our church,” including CORAR, both to support CORAR and to keep it under control.¹⁵¹

I think they were seriously committed to seeing the [UPCUSA] vindicate itself as a major liberal American denomination that ought to be committed to racial justice. But they were also nervous, about what this new black executive with this unusual power, and what those new black Commission members, whose names they did not know before, and had no experience with, would do with this new agency, with this \$500,000 commitment, unprecedented, for a social action agency of our church. And so, I got the feeling from time to time of a certain amount of paternalistic oversight. I think they were also interested in protecting the interests of their own agencies.¹⁵²

Black Presbyterians, like John Lewis and other black activists, were willing to live with this kind of leadership in the early 1960s, but by the middle of the decade they would no longer tolerate it.

“The Negro Revolt”: Linking Birmingham to Black Power

In a December 1963 article in *Social Progress*, this time as a guest writer, Wilmore took a more critical stance toward white Presbyterians and white liberals in general, and provided an extended analysis of “the white liberal,” revealing further tensions in his relationship with white allies.¹⁵³ His analysis consisted of criticisms of white liberals for 1) their decreasing support for racial justice, 2) their preference for incrementalism and opposition to the use of violence - “*evolution* rather than revolution,” 3) their inability to understand the significance of economics and class, and 4) their paternalism.

Wilmore approvingly noted Martin Luther King, Jr.’s harsh criticism of white liberals in his “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” However, instead of describing white liberals as responding well to King’s critique, as Eugene Carson Blake and other white Presbyterians were trying to do, Wilmore argued that even in the latter part of 1963, white liberal support for Civil Rights was *decreasing*, and that King’s “Letter” had therefore become even more relevant.

Wilmore said that via his “Letter,”

King has strongly suggested that we have entered a new phase in the coalition between Negro leadership and the white liberal. When the mass jailings began to increase, when the tempo of the protest marches quickened and police brutality broke out, when the bombs began to go off, some of our friends began slowing down. As one Negro leader put it, “White liberals are getting off the train.”¹⁵⁴

Wilmore asserted that despite an outpouring of support for Civil Rights after the Birmingham church bombing in September, northern white people soon reverted to the familiar suggestion that Civil Rights activists should “go slow.”¹⁵⁵

Wilmore argued that the white liberal preferred “*evolution* rather than revolution,” believed in the “essential goodness of people and especially in the fairness and basic decency of the white people in his own social class,” and thought that in creating social change, “it is know-how, technique, and rationality that win out.”¹⁵⁶ Wilmore connected this optimistic belief in the power of reason and decency to a distaste for violence and disorder, suggesting that this white liberal “recoils from conflict and the threat of violence,” believes that if one uses reason, “he will usually outsmart the bully and avoid the clash of violence,” and “will always sacrifice justice for the few to preserve law and order for all.”¹⁵⁷ Wilmore had made similar points in a speech at Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania the previous month.¹⁵⁸ Wilmore’s implied argument for the universality of sin, the inability of human reason to create social change, and the necessity of violence in creating such change could have come straight out of Reinhold Niebuhr’s 1932 *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.¹⁵⁹ His use of the term “revolution” again matched his comments in his early 1963 “New Negro and the Church,” and those of John Lewis at the MOW. This article was entitled “The Negro Revolt,” and Wilmore would later suggest that his preferred term for what others have called the “Civil Rights Movement,” “Black Freedom Struggle/Movement,” or “Second Reconstruction,” was “the Black Revolt” “or “Black Rebellion.”¹⁶⁰ He declined to describe it as a “revolution,” because it only resulted in limited successes.¹⁶¹

The most striking element of this essay, and how, through it, Wilmore distinguished himself from his “white liberal” colleagues, was his treatment of class and economics. Approvingly referring to “Marxist analysis,” he argued that the biggest disconnect between white liberals and most black Americans was the economic position of the two groups.¹⁶² White liberals had an economic interest in maintaining the status quo, in preventing the “chaos” of revolution via a “too aggressive uprising on the part of the Negro.”¹⁶³ Black liberals, by which he meant middle-class black Americans, were in a similar situation, “cut out of the same cloth” and therefore sometimes called “Uncle Toms” by working class black Americans.¹⁶⁴ Wilmore said, “what we are witnessing today is the polarization of the racial conflict along class lines,” a development he attributed in part to “the effect of the Black Muslims.”¹⁶⁵ He highlighted the influence of CORE, SNCC, James Baldwin, Carl Rowan, Louis Lomax, and, especially, Malcolm X on working class black Americans, saying that X, “in razor-sharp, bloodless terms, has spoken... the only truth their life experiences is able to authenticate.”¹⁶⁶ He added that “more than anything else accounting for this diminution of liberal influence and prestige with Negroes is the terrible desperation of the Negro masses themselves,” due to their unemployment, poverty, segregated housing, and “inferior schools, social services, and recreation facilities.”¹⁶⁷

The metro-ghettos are James Baldwin’s “another country,” a different world than the white liberal has ever known or could imagine for himself and his children. It is a world reeking with disillusionment and with a sense of defeat, frustration, and anger, a world of broken promises and nagging, unfulfilled dreams. It is this last-ditch, all-or-nothing desperation of the Negro masses that most white liberals do not seem to understand or appreciate.¹⁶⁸

These “metro-ghettos” included Wilmore’s own North Philadelphia origins. While he had been living the life of a “Negro liberal” as an adult, through his professional socioeconomic status and

working relationships with white colleagues, the words of Baldwin and Malcolm X must have resonated with him. He remembered the “disillusionment,” “broken promises,” “nagging, unfulfilled dreams,” and “all-or-nothing desperation” of his family’s poverty during his childhood, and despite his upscale new Princeton, New Jersey neighborhood, he maintained relationships with people still living in those desperate circumstances. Now, however, his class status and professional situation caused him to frequently brush shoulders with those who had no awareness of such life experiences. The perspective of white liberals “grows out of the soil of the particular socioeconomic problem in which the white liberal stands, and that is decidedly *not* the soil in which the Negro masses are rooted.”¹⁶⁹

When someone I meet asks, with a hint of exasperation, “Why all these childish demonstrations, these bailings out, only to demonstrate and be jailed again?” I know that he does not understand this terrible desperation. When [prominent *New York Times* journalist] James Reston, with his cool and calculating logic, inquires why Negro leadership does not see that those who want civil rights legislation have to take what they can get from this Congress, I know he does not appreciate the full extent of this desperation. For all of his political sagacity, Reston fails to realize that if anyone compromises the Negro’s civil rights from here on out, it must be the Negro himself and not white people of goodwill who say glibly that politics is the art of the possible.¹⁷⁰

Wilmore undoubtedly heard many such “glib” sayings in the majority-white Presbyterian circles in which he lived and worked, including the Princeton community, the Interchurch Center, and the Witherspoon Building.

Such analyses of white liberalism undoubtedly also resonated with Wilmore because of their critiques of paternalism - which Wilmore was experiencing in the United Presbyterian leadership. Wilmore suggested that in addition to economic security,

...the white liberal stands to lose, in the depths of his psyche, his sense of racial superiority, of which he rarely is able quite to deliver himself - his pride in whiteness and in all that it mystically symbolizes in excellence and achievement. He has to lose his

often unconscious pride of being white and therefore right.... He has to lose his pride of being the patron and leader of lesser men, especially those who have the misfortune of having been born black. This loss of ascendancy and leadership is a bitter pill for most white liberals to swallow. There is pathos in the words of a University of Alabama professor who bemoans... that Negro leadership no longer depends upon him: "I have never felt more lonely."¹⁷¹

However, Wilmore may not only have been thinking of white leaders like Bob Stone or Eugene Carson Blake in making this argument. He may also have been considering his own role as, albeit not white, a "patron and leader of lesser men," a spokesperson for for black people within a white-dominated institution. He approvingly quoted another commentator who described the aforementioned Alabama professor as "among those who once considered themselves the chosen messengers between the two races."¹⁷² Wilmore argued that the white liberal should "let the Negro decide, speak, and act for himself," working,

...as a behind-the-scenes operator who will raise the money, invoke the prestige, manipulate the social mechanisms of the white community, and penetrate the power structures.... to be mature enough not to get excited because Negro working-class people don't act like junior executives.... to be humble enough to stand quietly in the wings while the understudy performs, even though he may foul up the lines.... to remember that occasionally a new actor will change the script and steal the show.¹⁷³

Wilmore himself, especially while on the SEA and CORAR staff, would work largely "behind-the-scenes," in the halls of institutional power. In the next several years, Wilmore would indeed defer to working class and/or less "respectable" people who he surely thought, at some level, were "fouling up the lines" - people like the Watts rebels, U.S. Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, James Forman, and Angela Davis. He had defended and deferred to others who did not "act like junior executives" before, in James "Deac" Johnson, Milton Henry, Helena Robinson, and the Palestinian refugees. In many of these cases, "fouling up the lines" simply meant being more direct in making one's demands, perhaps presenting more as a "pillar of fire" than as

Wilmore's more subtle "pillar of cloud" persona. Especially in the case of James Forman, Wilmore, a thespian in his college days, would watch the activities of this "understudy" with some anxiety, but also with great respect and appreciation for how Forman would indeed "steal the show," forcing concessions from the white church which Wilmore and other "respectable" black "liberals" had been unable to secure.¹⁷⁴

Many of Wilmore's observations in this article anticipated what would become known as the Black Power movement beginning in 1966, especially in Wilmore's attentiveness to the views of Malcolm X. While this article suggested that Wilmore was following X from afar, the two men actually met in person a few months later. In March or April of 1964, Malcolm X met with "executives from various Presbyterian Agencies and boards," including Bryant George, Kenneth Neigh, David Ramage, and Gayraud Wilmore.¹⁷⁵ Malcolm X had recently left the Nation of Islam and begun seeking ways to work with other Civil Rights leaders and groups. In this meeting, X expressed his interest in cooperating with such groups, implicitly including the United Presbyterian Church.¹⁷⁶ He mentioned voter registration as a task of common interest. He suggested that one thing his own Muslim and black nationalist supporters could contribute was their connection to and appeal among working class African Americans.¹⁷⁷ He was harshly critical of the Johnson administration and the federal government in general, and expressed interest in pursuing justice at the United Nations level instead.¹⁷⁸ He argued for the use of force in self-defense, and he criticized an over-reliance on non-violent tactics.¹⁷⁹ He pointed out, again, increasing opposition to racial justice activism among northern white people.¹⁸⁰ He was critical of racial "intermarriage," and of piecemeal desegregation.¹⁸¹

Most interesting in relation to Wilmore were X's comments about black Presbyterians. One of the Presbyterians on the recording asked X a question about black Southern Presbyterians' discomfort at being seen as "objects of mission."¹⁸² X expressed understanding for that sentiment.¹⁸³ Then, he compared black people working for the white church to American Indians working as scouts for white people seeking to take land away from Indians.¹⁸⁴ Wilmore is not identified within the recording and does not appear to have spoken during it, but he might well have felt uncomfortable and/or convicted by X's implication that black Presbyterians and black people working for majority-white church institutions were working with the enemy and betraying black people. Wilmore's December 1963 "Negro Revolt" indicated that he was open to the voice of Malcolm X and other militants, and that he was attentive to economic/class analysis and white paternalism, thus providing further evidence of cracks in the foundation of the white-black Presbyterian alliance for racial justice.

The Confession of 1967

One more early fissure in this alliance was Wilmore's involvement in drafting the Confession of 1967 (C67). Prior to the 1960s, the major American Presbyterian denominations recognized one document, the seventeenth century Westminster Confession of Faith, as theologically foundational.¹⁸⁵ In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Presbyterians debated the nature of that Confession's authority, and amended it slightly.¹⁸⁶ When the PC (USA) and the UPCNA merged in 1958 to form the United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA), the new denomination appointed a "Special Committee on a Brief Contemporary Statement of Faith" to draft an entirely new theological statement, which would eventually become known as the

Confession of 1967 (C67).¹⁸⁷ Wilmore was a member of this drafting committee, beginning in 1959.¹⁸⁸ He was the only person of color on the committee, thus paralleling his concurrent role on the SEA staff and his role, beginning in 1960-61, on the faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He was also one of only two black professors at any of the denomination's predominately white seminaries at the time.¹⁸⁹ On this committee, as with the SEA and PTS, Wilmore seems to have often kept his own views to himself, and developed a reputation in the eyes of some white Presbyterian leaders as an easy-going, respectable, friendly black person who would not "rock the boat." With regard to his involvement in the C67 drafting committee, Wilmore later expressed regret that he did not feel sufficiently comfortable or empowered to speak out more, or at least to compel other committee members to respond to the concerns he raised about the new Confession. He was at the center of the leadership of his denomination through the drafting of this Confession, yet his relationship to the committee's leadership, and therefore to denominational leadership in general, was an uneasy one.

Early on, the drafting committee, chaired by Princeton Theological Seminary professor Edward A. Dowey, Jr. and composed largely of Neo-Orthodox academics, focused on how to craft a statement which would be more in line with contemporary Reformed theology than the 300-year-old Westminster Confession.¹⁹⁰ They did so by placing more emphasis on Jesus Christ than on the Bible. Partly at the urging of Eugene Carson Blake, they also chose, rather than revise or replace the Westminster Confession as the denomination's sole authoritative confession, to produce a "Book of Confessions" to include Westminster and the new "Confession of 1967," as well as several other historic creeds and confessions, thereby limiting the power of any one document and clarifying the role of historical context around such confessions.¹⁹¹ They

eventually settled on a list of seven historic creeds and confessions, including documents like the Nicene Creed and the Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁹² The importance of context also matched the committee's desire for its new statement to speak to present-day social concerns.

The nine original committee members first met in November 1958.¹⁹³ In 1959 the G.A. appointed eight additional members, including Gayraud Wilmore and Janet Harbison.¹⁹⁴ The committee began drafting the new Confession, and discussing specific social concerns, in 1960.¹⁹⁵ The committee considered presenting its official draft in 1964, but "a wide range of responses to unofficial drafts" led them to delay their presentation until the following year.¹⁹⁶ Per denominational rules, the G.A. then appointed a second committee to review and study the proposal over the next year, shifting the original drafting committee into an advisory capacity.¹⁹⁷ After receiving feedback and making revisions, in the 1966 G.A., which spent most of its time on this matter, approved the statement, sending it out to presbyteries for ratification.¹⁹⁸ In early 1967 the new Confession, as well as the new "Book of Confessions," was ratified and thus became official.¹⁹⁹

Racial and social justice were major drivers of the creation of C67, and among the new Confession's emphases. The denomination's 1965-67 Assemblies, which made the final decisions about the Confession, were racially progressive ones. A denomination which had felt a need to "catch up to Dr. King" in 1963 now felt that, in many respects, it had done so. Presbyterians thought themselves in the vanguard of a movement which had secured civil and voting rights for many African Americans. The 1967 Assembly even gave a qualified endorsement of Black Power.²⁰⁰ C67 also reflected a denomination which "had sufficient social

standing and self-confidence to believe that it could influence society and its leaders.”²⁰¹ The atmosphere would change, however, in the final years of the decade.

C67 used “reconciliation” as a central theme, and called for “reconciliation in society,” including “the abolition of all racial discrimination.”²⁰² The drafting committee had at first considered “redemption” as a theme, but began considering “reconciliation” as an alternative in 1960, and finalized that decision in April 1962.²⁰³ “Reconciliation” referred to the doctrine of justification by grace through faith, but committee members also intended it to fit well with the Confession’s expected emphasis on social concerns.²⁰⁴ In January 1963, the committee, which had long expected to include a section on social issues, began to focus on this section.

Wilmore, as an SEA staffer, professor of social ethics, and author of a 1962 book addressing the church’s relationship to social concerns, not to mention the only person of color on the committee, was, unsurprisingly, a major contributor to the committee’s attention to social and racial issues. As he recalled,

I participated. I was not silent. I spoke out and tried to press the issue of race at several meetings, and I must say that the members of the committee gave me the impression that they wanted to say something significant about the problem of race in America, which at that time was boiling over.... the 1964 Civil Rights Bill was passed during the time we were meeting, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act was enacted. The long hot summers of urban rebellion continued from 1964 through 1967. There were riots in Watts, in Newark, in Detroit, in Rochester, N.Y., in Cleveland and in Chicago while we were meeting, so race was constantly in the newspaper headlines, on the radio and on TV.²⁰⁵

A few months after the publication of *The Secular Relevance of the Church* and the committee’s decision to focus on “reconciliation,” Wilmore, as previously discussed, wrote on the topic of “reconciliation” in relation to race and integration for a February 1963 article in Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s *Perspective*.²⁰⁶ In April of that year, “with the memory of the Cuban

Missile Crisis (1962) still fresh and with the Civil Rights Movement moving into high gear,” only a month before the creation of CORAR, Wilmore “presented a draft [to other committee members] that called for a comprehensive ethical statement, arguing that the church stood in a ‘time of crisis, and therefore was called to activity with a sense of urgency.’”²⁰⁷ Wilmore cited “three great problems,”

...the sin of racial prejudice and discrimination... the sin of an economic situation in which millions live in poverty, and the sin of the hostility between the people of the United States and the people of the Soviet Union, which has suspended the whole world over an abyss of destruction.²⁰⁸

The concerns about racial and economic justice had of course long been central for Wilmore, and the Cold War concern reflected his military experience, the influence of Quakers and other pacifists in the Tanguy era, and his ambivalence about communism. His draft of this section, condemning racial discrimination, economic oppression, and militarism, largely survived and made it into the committee’s official draft as presented to the 1965 G.A.²⁰⁹ Despite major revisions to the section on militarism, his draft served as the root of the Confession’s final language on social issues.²¹⁰ In 1966, the “Committee of Fifteen,” the group tasked with deciding whether to continue with the 1965 draft created by the drafting committee, added a fourth paragraph to the section on social issues.²¹¹ Theological and social conservatives had been the strongest supporters of adding this paragraph, which addressed marriage, family, gender, and sexuality, albeit in a compromise fashion which reflected widespread concern about, yet little consensus on, such issues.²¹²

Wilmore was therefore successful in causing American Presbyterians to make perhaps their most forceful statement to date, and certainly their first confessional statement to date,

against racism, economic oppression, and militarism, even crafting much of the language itself. However, in the end Wilmore was satisfied neither with the drafting committee's process, nor with its final product, largely because he did not feel sufficiently empowered to push the committee to make a stronger statement for racial and social justice. In terms of the process, he recalled,

I was the only African-American on the committee. That surprised me a bit because this was a period of great sensitivity about tokenism in the church, the (Black) community and the nation. Being the only Black left me almost powerless to have any influence on the final document, but for White Presbyterian scholars to have only one African American and thus only one minority person of any kind on this committee was also a confession of their own. That is to say, the people who decided we would have a new confession did not see what was going on in the nation to be so pressing as to require a larger representation from minority groups. That was a shock because it was plain to see that it was an impossible task for one person to represent all Blacks, much less all minorities, in that august group of 10-15 experts at any meeting.²¹³

This was yet another occasion in which Wilmore was selected to represent African Americans in an otherwise all-white setting, and one in which he felt marginalized and unable to influence the larger group. Of the church's tendency to limit the participation of people of color on decision-making bodies like this one, Wilmore said, "I think this was the generally-accepted pattern. And I must say that I felt a little guilty that I did not protest the absence of other minority persons more loudly."²¹⁴ He recalled Edward A. Dowey, Jr., the chair of the drafting committee, and other white committee members "arguing that they would have liked to have Black scholars but there weren't any available."²¹⁵ However, as Wilmore later pointed out, in addition to himself and Herbert King at McCormick Theological Seminary who were the the only black professors at predominantly white U.S. Presbyterian seminaries at the time, there were black Presbyterian professors at the all-black Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary.²¹⁶ Wilmore added that he

would have preferred that the committee also include black scholars from closely-related denominations like the United Church of Christ.²¹⁷ Of his largely solitary efforts to promote racial justice on the drafting committee, Wilmore recalled,

Now I don't want to sound bitter about this because I am not. I went to those working sessions two or three times a year and was as affable as anybody else. I would shake hands with the brothers and sisters, sit down, have coffee and work with them on various parts of the documents. We did a lot of writing and exchanging of notes, and Ed Dowey would take them home and revise. We would come back to another meeting and continue working. This went on for more than seven years. We worked for a long time, but it soon became clear to me, as one voice in the wilderness, as one vote, that I could not convince the brothers and sisters that race should be taken more seriously and given a larger place in the document.²¹⁸

At a 1982 symposium convened in order to reflect on the Confession, according to Wilmore, Dowey recalled his "disappointment" that Wilmore, as the black person on the committee, "did not help to keep the committee as honest as might have been thought and hoped in the development of the section having to do with racial justice," and that he "didn't press points more forcefully so that the committee might have been instructed on the question of racial justice...."²¹⁹ Wilmore responded, "I'm certain that Ed cannot really be serious when he implies that one little black seminary professor could have made a great deal of difference on that committee."²²⁰

Edward Dowey's disappointment partly had to do with the fact that Wilmore had stopped coming to meetings - essentially quitting the committee without formally resigning - starting sometime after his CORAR appointment in 1963.²²¹ At the symposium, Dowey responded to Wilmore, saying, "I was always disappointed and not exactly sure why you dropped out, you didn't resign, you just quit coming.... My feeling was that you probably were in great transition at the time," and "that you were dwelling with new things that you didn't yet understand" in

terms of the development of Black Power and Black Theology.²²² He added, “I never recall any pressure from you, I thought you were just too busy.”²²³ Wilmore admitted that he was in transition and quite busy with CORAR.²²⁴ However, he largely attributed his own disengagement from the drafting committee with his frustration at not being able to influence it further in terms of race, saying, “I began not to come, because I just didn’t see that I was making any difference....”²²⁵ He added,

...but I recall that people were very impatient on that drafting committee to spend much time on that subject [of race]. That I do remember. And I can’t say that I altogether blame them, I might have jumped up and down and stomped and yelled, I didn’t do that, that was not my style in those days, it isn’t my style today, but in any case I think it is rather incredible for anyone to imagine that I could have had very much influence in changing the direction of that drafting committee at that time, when people were concentrated on larger questions, what were considered to be much more important theological issues, than to be drawn aside and diverted from the main task by somebody who was thought maybe to be responding to the current racial unrest in the nation.²²⁶

Wilmore also said, in terms of the pressure he might have applied to the rest of the committee,

...my recollection was that that was not possible on my part, or on the part of any one single minority person on that committee. The momentum was in another direction. The momentum was in the direction of a theological statement around the question of reconciliation, rooted in the great doctrines of the church that the Confession deals with, and rather askew from the question of what’s going on in the contemporary arena of race relations.²²⁷

Wilmore also said, regarding Edward Dowey’s later commentary on C67’s paragraph on race,

Dowey’s commentary on the paragraph admits that the Confession was being “written, debated, and adopted” during that turbulent period in race relations. But then, with unsuspecting naïveté, that would be cute if it were not so incriminating, the commentary goes on to imply that “the meaning of the gospel” and “the rapid changes going on in the nation” made it necessary for the drafters to deal forthrightly with the radical issue of interracial marriages. Now I have no real recollection that interracial marriages got discussed an awful lot in that committee, if Ed says so then maybe it was, but I don’t recall that. Maybe it was discussed more after my departure. In any case, that certainly would be a luxury that we could ill afford to talk about at a time when much much more

important issues were seething around the question of black and white relationships in the United States.²²⁸

Wilmore said that the better move in terms of process would have been,

...to refer the whole issue of race to [the Presbyterian black caucus] at that point, to see what kind of reflection could be made upon it, by the organized group of black churchmen and women in our church, and I don't know whether I suggested that or not, I must have at some point.²²⁹

Wilmore also said of the drafting committee's work, "I don't recall very many women in those meetings."²³⁰ Indeed there was only one female committee member, Janet Harbison. She and Wilmore were both appointed in 1959. Harbison later described Wilmore and herself as "a token black and a token woman" on the committee.²³¹ Recalling "a time when 'as empty as the ladies' room at the General Assembly' was a frequent figure of speech among Presbyterian wags," Harbison later reported having been "told when I was asked to serve on the Dowey committee, '[when a national committee is small] we don't worry too much about its composition. But when it gets a little bigger, we have to have a woman and a Negro.'"²³² Harbison also said that it had been "hinted to me" that "the committee hoped to draw on the wisdom of my husband, a historian of the Reformation."²³³ Several years later, Harbison interviewed Wilmore for the *Presbyterian Life* article, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore," in which she described him as a "solid black hyphen" (see Introduction and Chapter 4).²³⁴ Despite her comments about the drafting committee's sexism and tokenism, her general description of the work of the committee was glowing, saying, twenty years later, that for his work in particular, Dowey "truly deserves to be put up in stained glass."²³⁵

Wilmore did express some appreciation for Dowey, but was also quite critical of him. Wilmore especially felt that the drafting committee was too focused on academic, Princeton-

centric concerns about Reformed theology, of which Dowey, as a Reformation scholar and professor at Princeton Theological Seminary, was the epitome.

The people who stand out for me [on the committee] are the representatives of Princeton Theological Seminary. There was Dowey, of course, the chairperson of our committee, and I must say a very able chair. There were other strong Presbyterian scholars from Princeton as well, and it is not an exaggeration to say that they dominated many of the conversations.²³⁶

Wilmore himself lived in Princeton from 1963 to 1972, and therefore overlapped with several of the other members as local residents. These included Edward Dowey, George S. Hendry, and Charles C. West, all of whom were on the seminary's faculty at the time, as well as John A. Mackay who had retired as President of the seminary in 1959, and Janet Harbison. Harbison was a graduate of the seminary, married to Princeton University historian F. Harris Harbison until his 1964 death, and a resident of Princeton from 1937 until her 2004 death.²³⁷ She also "took a leadership role" in working to desegregate local public schools in the early 1950s, and "she was one of the first white members of the Witherspoon [Street Presbyterian] Church in Princeton, where she nurtured some of her closest friendships."²³⁸ The Wilmore family also attended this historic black Presbyterian church - pastored in the 1890s by Paul Robeson's father - during its Princeton years. Harbison served as editor of *Presbyterian Life* magazine, published out of Philadelphia, from 1959 to 1972, and on the administrative staff of the seminary, and was deeply involved with the Consultation for Church Union.²³⁹ Many of the other members of the drafting committee were professors at other seminaries and/or held degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary. Wilmore felt that the committee's academic, Princeton-based focus on Reformed concerns kept the committee from paying sufficient attention to racial and social justice.

I will concede... that the members of the drafting committee were wise enough to recognize that they could not bring out a radical document that lifted up race as a primary focus and expect to have that kind of document pass through the General Assembly and the presbyteries to become an official confession of the United Presbyterian Church. So there was political caution and a sense that we had to compromise to get this document accepted by the church. At the same time we needed to make sure that the confession dealt with the most pressing political and social realities, namely race, and the question of national security, the issue of poverty, and the question of sexual relationships (which I supported adding). By shaping the confession around the rock of reconciliation, I believe they made a sincere effort to declare God's will and purpose on these four major concerns that were being debated in the public square. That said, the Confession of 1967's major thrust was to deal with the problem of scripture and the necessity of bringing the church out of an antiquated, outmoded obsession with the doctrines of infallibility and total (plenary) inspiration of the Bible.... So race was there; it was important, but it was not dealt with in such a way as to deepen the analysis and to prescribe methods by which reconciliation might be achieved between Black and White in America at the time.... much more needed to be said. That was inadequate for the time in which the document was written, and it is inadequate for us today.²⁴⁰

He added,

C67 is important historically and well rooted in Calvinism and its then contemporary expressions, but it is not where we ought to be at the present time.... I don't think either the faculty or the C67 committee was tuned in to the shaking of the foundations of the American society and the American church that was happening between 1963 and 1967. 1963 was the turning point with the March on Washington, the murder of Medgar Evers, and the bombing of the Birmingham church...²⁴¹

Of the confession's promotion of inclusiveness, Wilmore said,

[C67] claims that the Spirit of God is inclusive, judging those who exclude in any way, but that is moving away from the really critical question. That question was the faithlessness of the Presbyterian Church in the face of the demonic power of racism in society and in the White church in America. That is the real heart of the issue. That confession or admission was not made. We did not say that the Presbyterian Church is guilty of racism and that this racism must be extirpated from the church in ways that could be explicated, if not in this document, then somewhere else.²⁴²

Wilmore was especially critical of the central theme of “reconciliation.” He said that this term was “inadequate for dealing with racial injustice and ethnic hatred,” and instead argued for the term “liberation.”²⁴³

[Liberation] should have been lifted up as one of the major revisions of the churches’ concern. Liberation without reconciliation is stained, and reconciliation without liberation is empty. That was the point I tried to make in those meetings, in the hallways, around the coffee table. We simply cannot have reconciliation without liberation.²⁴⁴

“Reconciliation” has a theological meaning as well as a social meaning. In either case, it can (and should) refer to a process of reestablishing a meaningful relationship between two or more parties after one or more of them has harmed or offended another. “Reconciliation” can also include repair of such harm in addition to this reestablishment of relationship. However, all too often in relation to racial and social justice, “reconciliation” becomes a term which the offending party, without taking sufficient steps to repair the harm it has caused, uses to demand that its victim just “move on” or “get past” old resentments. Instead of serving as a second step after the first step of repairing harm or creating justice, it serves as an alternative to justice. In that case, instead of supporting the work of justice, it does the opposite, abetting the maintenance of injustice. “Liberation” is also not a perfect term. However, for Wilmore, it came closer to what he actually wanted: the freeing of one who has been imprisoned by unjust conditions. While one can speak of “reconciliation” without actually addressing the conditions of harm/imprisonment, one cannot do the same with “liberation.”

Wilmore recalled that his teacher, George Kelsey, in his 1965 book, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*, had characterized racism as “false religion” and “apostasy,” a view which had deeply influenced Wilmore and contrasted with C67’s timidity about attacking

white supremacy.²⁴⁵ Wilmore said of this definition of racism as “apostasy,” “this was not said in the Confession of 1967 quite so radically, though it could have been.”²⁴⁶

As previously mentioned, a symposium was held in 1982 to reflect on C67. It took place at Princeton Theological Seminary and was intended to examine the Confession’s “contemporary implications.” Gayraud Wilmore attended and addressed the symposium, as did fellow drafting committee members Edward A. Dowey, Jr. and Charles C. West. Dowey spoke at the end of the proceedings, noting his satisfaction that the event had been neither a “wake” nor a “celebration,” but rather an opportunity to examine “contemporary implications.”²⁴⁷ In summarizing the comments made by Wilmore and others at the symposium, Dowey said,

However, there were those who held that the Confession of ’67 is not an adequate confessional base for the time that we are coming to. One of the most interesting of these, because it involved a member of the committee, is Gayraud Wilmore. He, with great attention to the text and with a lot of memory about his participation in this and his dropping out of it said that in fact that the doctrine of reconciliation as formulated in paragraph forty-four is really based on a white racial superiority and a kind of condescension that embodies still the very patronizing and dominating aspects that it professes to repudiate, and he held that it hadn’t listened even adequately in the time that it written, to groups of the disinherited that are within the Presbyterian church, ethnic minorities and others, who could have given it the kind of a thrust that it should have had.²⁴⁸

Dowey also noted criticisms made by Beverly W. Harrison of the Confession’s treatment of gender and sexuality. In his own remarks, Wilmore described the Confession’s section on social concerns, subtitled “Reconciliation in Society,” as “practically irrelevant” to concurrent events in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements.²⁴⁹ Wilmore pointed out that the paragraph on race was the shortest of the four paragraphs in the section on social concerns, and that it did not deal with the primary concerns of people of color in the late 1960s, in terms of “cultural identity,” “pride,” and “self-determination.” He added,

Now my purpose is not to condemn the Confession for what it failed to say about the greatest social problem of the twentieth century, but it does seem important to consider the difference, between the words written by unquestionably intelligent and honorable white men, and the social context outside of the drafting room in the early 1960s. By so doing, we may take measure of what is and what may be the necessary difference between the path to racial justice chosen by the confession of faith of a predominately white church, and the path that the majority of black people have been forced to take by the logic of historical circumstances, and the way that they perceive the Christian, the American, reality.²⁵⁰

He also criticized the term “reconciliation.”

Let me say something about the relationship between reconciliation and liberation to begin with. The term reconciliation itself was suspect in the black community at the time that this Confession was being drafted. Reconciliation called to mind the interracial fellowship movement which had just preceded the full thrust of the racial justice movement of the 1960s. It was a movement that was based upon the slogan of the National Council of Churches, a “nonsegregated church in a nonsegregated society.” At least the word was associated with that whole movement of interracial fellowship, of getting together, of getting to know one another, of dealing with prejudices in our hearts, and becoming friends and brothers and sisters in the life of the church.²⁵¹

Recall, for example, Wilmore’s description of Lincoln University’s summer conferences, which were sponsored by the PC (USA), providing “an opportunity to meet, sleep, talk, and eat together on the lovely tree-shaded campus of Lincoln University, where we could sit on the grass in circles and entertain each other with stories about how we first became aware of our racial phobias and prejudices.”²⁵² Wilmore accepted and even welcomed those opportunities, noting his “fond memories” of those conferences as “an opportunity to get to know white Christians in a way that had not been possible in North Philadelphia.”²⁵³ He also said that “black Christians recognize that according to scripture, reconciliation between God and humankind, and between earthly opposites, black and white, Jew and gentile, male and female, was, of course, the ultimate goal of history and the mission of the church.”²⁵⁴ However, because of the aforementioned way in which the term “reconciliation” can be misused, “we preferred some other word less possible

of misunderstanding in that period.”²⁵⁵ He gave his own explanation for the term’s potential misuse, and for how such potential rendered the term “suspect” among African Americans at the time.

Reconciliation seemed to many black folks to imply conciliation and pacification, the compromise of just demands in order to avoid conflict, to soften antagonism, and make what many people considered to be a premature peace with the oppressor. Ordinary people were not interested in the nice theological distinctions that [San Francisco Theological Seminary theologian] Arnold [Come] made yesterday, between what might be called a cheap reconciliation and a more costly reconciliation. The word itself conjured up ideas of pacification, rather than a more profound understanding of the encounter between God and persons, and between persons, which I think Arnold was pointing to, as the basis of our Confession of ’67.²⁵⁶

To illustrate his respect for the idea of reconciliation in principle, as well as how the Confession’s use of the term did not resonate, in his view, with African Americans in the mid-1960s, he said,

In order to get a line on what was being said about reconciliation in the black community, one might look for example at the ad that was published in the *The New York Times* on July 31, 1966, by a distinguished group of black church people, which made the following observation about reconciliation. “Getting power necessarily involves reconciliation,” getting power necessarily involves reconciliation. “We must first be reconciled to ourselves, lest we fail to recognize the resources we already have and upon which we can build,” talking about black folks. “We must reconcile to ourselves as persons and to ourselves as an historical group. This means we must find our way to a new self-image in which we can feel a normal sense of pride in self, including our variety of skin color, and the manifold textures of our hair. As long as we are filled with hatred for ourselves, we will be unable to respect others.”²⁵⁷

Wilmore argued that “liberation” would have been a better word, though it was not widely used until later in the 1960s, and he pointed out that the drafting committee would not have been open to a word like that.²⁵⁸ Regarding terms like “liberation,” “particularity, self-reliance, cultural pluralism, self-determination, strategic separation,” or “black nationalism,” “anyone who would

have pressed those points on the committee would have been seen as a spoilsport, an exploiter of headlines.”²⁵⁹

Wilmore certainly seems to have had a difficult time in a rather racist (in the microaggressive, white liberal sense) committee process, and C67’s use of “reconciliation” certainly did not match the *zeitgeist* of the late 1960s era of Black Power or the 1970s era of Black Theology. However, some of Wilmore’s recollections of the committee process are a bit anachronistic. In the 1950s and even the early 1960s, the term “reconciliation” in relation to race had a progressive, even radical connotation, as a synonym for racial justice. By the late 1960s, “reconciliation” had become a favorite term among white racists - in the sense of “moving on” from past resentments without having received justice. Racial “reconciliation” has tended to have that same connotation ever since.²⁶⁰ “Reconciliation” in the 1960s is comparable to the phrase “all lives matter” in the early twenty-first century. In the 2000s, if someone had used such a phrase in relation to race and police violence, the phrase would have referred to a goal of reducing police violence against African Americans. However, after the 2013 creation of the organization and phrase “Black Lives Matter,” people who use the phrase “all lives matter” have tended to do so in order to oppose any efforts to reduce police violence against African Americans - or, more broadly, to support a white supremacist agenda. In Wilmore’s case, the story is obscured by the fact that C67 was made official in 1967, but the key period for its creation, including the period in which Wilmore was part of that process, took place between 1959 and 1964. By 1970, and perhaps even in 1966-67, Wilmore certainly would have disapproved of C67’s use of “reconciliation.” But did he find that term suspect in 1962-63? This seems unlikely. Instead, at the 1982 symposium Wilmore may have been conflating the real

racism of the early 1960s drafting committee's process with an anachronistic critique of the slippery term, "reconciliation."

Regardless, at the 1982 symposium Wilmore retained deep concerns about the process and content of C67, and remained unyielding in voicing those criticisms in the presence of Edward Dowey and others. However, it is also significant that, despite all of these concerns about both process and content, Wilmore still attended and contributed to this symposium, and even preached for the event's closing worship.²⁶¹

From Selma to Watts: The Movement Expands Beyond the South

In 1963-64, Gayraud Wilmore was the face of his predominantly white denomination's efforts to "catch up with Dr. King," and was generating what would soon become the denomination's most forthright confessional statements on Civil Rights, economic justice, and militarism to date. But he was also learning more about the history of black religion, reading James Baldwin, listening to the words of Malcolm X, feeling patronized by white liberal church executives, and realizing the futility of his involvement on the C67 drafting committee. These cracks in the foundation of his alliance with white Presbyterians like Eugene Carson Blake, Bob Stone, and Edward Dowey would widen in the second half of the decade. For Wilmore personally, perhaps this alliance never completely fell apart. As in the example of his contributions to the 1982 C67 symposium, Wilmore remained engaged with his denomination for the rest of his career. However, for the United Presbyterian Church, and for predominantly white mainline denominations in general, in their relationships to African Americans and racial justice activism, a radical change took place between 1963 and 1969. During that period, "white

moderates,” including Presbyterians, moved from support for racial justice in an effort to “catch up with Dr. King,” to becoming themselves a target of activists, and responding to such later activism with bewilderment and hostility. In 1963 King had called the church a “tail light” rather than a “head light” in the struggle. While the white church seemed to move a little more toward “head light” status in 1963-66, by 1969 black activists would characterize the white church more as a nail in the tire of King’s automobile of racial justice.

How did this transition occur? Increasing radicalism and black consciousness among black leaders did play a role, as did black leaders’ strategic decisions about when and how to work with white “allies.” However, the most important factor in this transformation was the shift in the Civil Rights Movement’s geographic focus, turning from the South to the North and West as ground zero for the fight for racial justice. The predominantly non-southern white people who provided key support for Civil Rights in the early 1960s understood the movement as focused on a “southern problem,” a “foreign mission” to a strange and savage land. This dynamic was especially clear in the example of American Presbyterianism, given that white southern Presbyterians were in their own denomination, unlike most of the rest of American Presbyterians.²⁶² White non-Southerners were relatively supportive of demonstrations in the South against Jim Crow laws. But when activists turned their attention to injustices outside the South, to the backyards of these northern “white moderates,” white people became less enthusiastic about the cause. This transition, geographically and otherwise, was a gradual one, taking place over the course of several years. However, it is best illustrated through four events in 1965, three of them in August of that year, as experienced by Gayraud Wilmore: the Selma-to-

Montgomery march, passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Watts Rebellion, and a “Christian Action” conference in Montreat, North Carolina.

Selma and the Voting Rights Act

The 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery march epitomized the warm embrace between black and non-southern white religious activists which, despite the aforementioned tensions, was characteristic of the 1963-65 period. Wilmore recalled the march, like the 1963 creation of CORAR, using celebratory language, describing it as “a high point of the civil rights movement,” a “dramatic and triumphant breakthrough,” involving “bishops, priests, journeymen preachers, and lay people, black and white,” many of them, like Tom Michael, from the North.²⁶³ Of the scene when marchers arrived in Montgomery to hear “one of [King’s] greatest addresses,” Wilmore wrote,

The church, in its broadest sense, was there. Protestant, Catholic, Jew, PhDs, DDs, and no-Ds. The march drew blacks, whites, and assorted colors from every part of the nation. It was Old Home Week again.... More than at the March on Washington in 1963, the *church*, locked-armed and singing “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ‘Round,” was at Selma.²⁶⁴

It was a religious “pilgrimage,” a carnival, a “joyous celebration not unlike the ring-shout of the African-American slave church,” and “it is not blasphemous to say that God danced down Highway 80.”²⁶⁵

This was also a time of great success for the movement, the culmination of the early 1960s “height” of the Civil Rights Movement, including its most well-known events like the Birmingham Campaign, Mississippi Freedom Summer, and passage of the Civil and Voting Rights Acts, during which Martin Luther King, Jr. was a central figure and white popular opinion

was relatively sympathetic to the movement. In the UPCUSA, that phase of the movement continued a bit later, through the 1967 ratification the denomination's new Confession. On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) into law. The alliance of black activists and white moderates, who had banded together in joyous religious pilgrimage at Selma only a few months previously, had achieved its highest goal. According to Harvard Sitkoff, "At this relatively peaceful and prosperous moment, public support for King's dream appeared unprecedented."²⁶⁶

The Watts Rebellion

These "high points" were short-lived. 1965, especially the month of August, would prove to be the key transitional year for Wilmore and CORAR. A few days after the signing of the VRA, "the most destructive race riot in more than two decades" broke out in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles.²⁶⁷ Outraged by police violence, African Americans rebelled, an August 11-16 (Wednesday through Monday) insurrection which resulted in thirty-four deaths and \$40 million in property damage.²⁶⁸ This was one episode in a series of riots or rebellions during the summers of 1964-68 in most major non-southern cities.²⁶⁹ Gayraud Wilmore, like King and others, traveled to Los Angeles, seeking to "mobilize and politicize congregations for an intelligent and faithful response to the black revolution."²⁷⁰ It seems that some churches were already mobilized. According to Wilmore,

One night in August 1965 I crouched behind a barricade in Watts that members of a black Presbyterian church had erected to prevent the Hell's Angels, circling with motors roaring on the nearby freeway, from penetrating and terrorizing the neighborhood in retaliation for violence against whites during the rebellion. Some of the men had guns. While they patrolled the barricade, smoking and talking quietly, waiting to be attacked,

the women of the church served coffee. . . . Thankfully, the motorcycle gang circled the area for an hour and wisely decided to pass it up.²⁷¹

Days later, Wilmore traveled back across the country to Philadelphia, where he spoke during a press conference at the Witherspoon Building on Tuesday, August 17, before leaving for a conference in North Carolina. Wilmore's first public response to the rebellion, via this speech, was sympathetic, but also distancing. As reported in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Wilmore explained that he had spent several days in Watts "talking with residents, including some that had taken part in the riots," and expressed concern about a food shortage in the area.²⁷² He "stressed the importance of clearing up charges of police brutality and harassment - which appears to have been a major factor in the riots."²⁷³ He also blamed the rebellion on the police having prevented "a huge open-air dance" from occurring the night before. "Had the dance been held," he said, "it certainly would have permitted hundreds, even thousands, in the district to let off steam in a happy, pleasant, friendly atmosphere of song, dancing and music." "But instead of permitting the dance, police came marching down Imperial [Street], four abreast," and "the next night the rioting broke out."²⁷⁴ Wilmore, in *Evening Bulletin's* paraphrase, "spoke of a complete breakdown in communications between middle-class, responsible Negroes in Watts and the poorer, less stable elements. This, he said, was a major reason why the outbreaks were not resolved sooner."²⁷⁵ He apparently described "gang leaders" there as "semi-illiterates," and said that some of the local gangs were "let by mothers on public assistance and by males with juvenile and prison records."²⁷⁶ "He also said that responsible, law-abiding Negroes in Watts 'deplore what happened there,' and want the law breakers dealt with by law," and that "the

churches and responsible Negro leadership there will have to step in to restore racial peace in the area.”²⁷⁷

While Wilmore was concerned about food shortages and police brutality, in this speech, at least as filtered through the *Evening Bulletin*, Wilmore sounded a lot like the white and black liberals he had criticized in his December 1963 “The Negro Revolt.” He juxtaposed the “poorer, less stable elements,” including “semi-illiterates” and “mothers on public assistance” against “middle class, responsible,” “law-abiding Negroes” who “deplore what happened there.” He even implied that the problems of working class Watts African Americans were trivial enough that they could have been easily pacified through a “happy, pleasant, friendly atmosphere of song, dancing and music.” However, over the next two days Wilmore had more time to think through his stance toward these rebels, and the extent to which he, as the child of an unemployed father and a domestic worker mother from among the “poorer, less stable elements” of the slums of North Philadelphia, identified with the residents of Watts.

Two days later, Wilmore spoke at a conference on “Christian Action” at a small Presbyterian conference center in Montreat, North Carolina. He and Martin Luther King, Jr. were the keynote speakers for the conference. King was scheduled to speak to open the conference, on Thursday, August 19.²⁷⁸ However, King remained in Watts, for several days after the rebellion, dealing with its aftermath. King was able to get there by Saturday, August 21. In the meantime, conference organizers asked Wilmore to adjust his schedule to take on the Thursday speaking slot in King’s stead.²⁷⁹ At the conference, both Wilmore and King tried to explain the Watts Rebellion to a largely white, southern Presbyterian audience.²⁸⁰ Thus within a couple of weeks Wilmore shifted from celebrating the success of voting rights legislation, to responding to inner

city militancy outside the South, to interpreting and defending that militancy to a largely white, southern, Christian audience.

According to the conference's lead organizer, PC (US) minister Malcolm P. Calhoun, in Wilmore's Thursday evening opening speech, "His commanding physical presence and the quality of his address set the tone for the conference."²⁸¹ In this speech, while Wilmore asserted that "Civil Rights organizations" did not lead the rebellion, he also called the rebellion "indirectly related to the Civil Rights struggle."²⁸² He explained and, in some ways, justified the "riots" as a product of despair among young African Americans.²⁸³ He translated the violence into what he thought the demonstrators really meant.

The demonstrators out of the ghetto are saying, "Hey, look at me. Take account of me. I'm a person. I live in that place back there, which you never see because you drive around it. But you're going to pay some attention to me because I'm going to walk down your main street in the middle of the day... I'm black, I'm a person, I'm poor, I'm an American and I will not let you rest in your tranquil community any longer."²⁸⁴

Wilmore went on,

There are a lot of people who are saying that this is what has happened because of the Civil Rights Movement. We've got to see that these things are related, but they're not the same. It is not the chosen strategy of the Civil Rights Movement.²⁸⁵

In other words, one cannot blame urban violence on leaders like King despite shared concerns about racism, in the same way that one cannot call King a communist just because there are some communists who share his concern for racial justice. Wilmore also may have been thinking, here, about "Civil Rights Movement" leaders having to respond to people who, as he put it in his December 1963 "The Negro Revolt," "don't act like junior executives" and sometimes "foul up the lines."²⁸⁶ Wilmore continued, saying that even though urban rebellion "is not the chosen strategy of the Civil Rights Movement,"

It is now the procedure by which Civil Rights leadership, both white and black, in this country seek to achieve the objective of racial justice. We're responsible for it and we're going to have to deal with it. But we must know that the way we deal with it is to recognize the legitimate aspirations of the Civil Rights Movement, and to work with responsible Negro leadership to accomplish the ends of that Movement.²⁸⁷

"It is not the chosen strategy...*It is now the procedure...*" Wilmore seems to have recognized - in the two days since his Philadelphia press conference in which he had bemoaned the activities of working-class, "irresponsible" African Americans - that this was a new phase in the movement, rather than a mere sideshow. He retained, of course, a sense that, while perhaps these "understudies" deserved a chance to try on the role, they still needed guidance from "responsible Negro leadership." He continued, but only now did it become clear just how deeply he had been affected, at a personal level, by what he had seen in Watts.

What can we learn about these riots of 1964 and of this year? As brilliant as the Civil Rights leaders are, they do not know what it is to face policemen every night.... They don't know what it is to fight rats all day, to have to sit up in the bed with a pair of shoes to throw at them.... They don't know what it is to be literally emasculated by your wife who works when you can't work, who is able to earn something... in a white suburban kitchen. They do not know what it is to have their dignity taken away from them by the condition of the American Negro family in the deepest heart of the ghettos of the North and West.²⁸⁸

The son of Patricia Gardner Wilmore, the mother who had to work in white people's kitchens to keep the family afloat in the slums of North Philadelphia, and the son of Gayraud S. Wilmore, Sr., the proud veteran father financially ruined by the Great Depression, was now speaking from experience.²⁸⁹ He seems to have forgotten such experience - to have momentarily failed to remember who he was - at his Philadelphia press conference on Tuesday, at which he had spoken from his professional, "responsible" class position. He had previously supported early Civil Rights actions against segregation and disfranchisement in the South. However, as the movement

shifted toward the economic concerns highlighted by the mid-1960s rebellions of the urban North and West, for the first time Wilmore fully saw the cause as his own. He was no longer fighting for the sometimes detached theological ideals he had learned and taught in seminary classrooms. He was fighting for the survival of his people, of the kinds of people with whom he had grown up. Like the biblical prophet Esther, Wilmore realized that he come into his position “for such a time as this.”

Wilmore and King both came to this conference from Watts, and in their addresses both tried to explain the “riots” to a white audience. Yet Wilmore went further than King in justifying the rebellion. King was the son of a prominent preacher and a child of the Atlanta black middle class, so he did not identify with the Watts rebels in terms of socioeconomic class or geography in the same way that Wilmore did. Wilmore, although he seemed to have momentarily forgotten it at his Tuesday Philadelphia press conference, had a more personal understanding, through the family of his birth, of non-southern poor black people’s resentment of the power of racism and economic oppression over their lives, and of the fervent desire for dignity among African Americans in the “ghettos of the North and West.” He remembered, now, that no “huge open-air dance,” however “pleasant” its atmosphere, could satisfy that desire for dignity. He had also pointed out that middle-class leaders like King could not understand the conditions of such people. In closing his speech, Wilmore called for increased attention to economic concerns in the movement, in light of the contexts of Watts and North Philadelphia.

The Civil Rights Movement... does not reach the deepest needs of these people, which is spiritual, as well as material.... In a world, in a community, in a society that is becoming increasingly stratified, in a society in which the poor are increasingly invisible.... This is the meaning, what we have learned from what’s going in Los Angeles.²⁹⁰

CHRISTIAN ACTION CONFERENCE

AUGUST 19-22, 1965—MONTREAT, N. C.



Figure 16. Christian Action Conference brochure, *The Church and Civil Rights*, 1965.

“Christian Action Conference brochure, *The Church and Civil Rights*, 1965,” “Presbyterians and the Civil Rights Movement: Martin Luther King Jr.,” p. 2, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/history-online/exhibits/martin-luther-king-jr-page-2>, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

This speech also reflected Wilmore's skill at translating black rhetoric and activism for white people, and his growing sense of his role as celebrating, encouraging and responding to radical, popular black activism, trying to gently guide such activism toward more "legitimate" and "responsible" leaders, means, and ends, but almost never directly condemning such activism, even when it took on a "disrespectable" or "fiery" public face. This skill had previously been evident in his 1958 defense of Palestinian refugees, his 1947 defense of Milton Henry, and even in his 1947 intervention in the dispute over the use of stoves in Lincoln's "Vets' Village." One white Southerner, Malcolm P. Calhoun, said that Wilmore "was able to communicate in a vivid way the tragedy of the riots and the relevance of the conditions in the black community resulting in these expressions of anger and discontent."²⁹¹ At this point, Wilmore still remained better classified as a hyphenated, relatively unoffending, irenic "pillar of cloud" who could appeal to someone like Calhoun. However, he was beginning a transition over the next two years into a more "solidly black" hyphen, a "pillar of fire," one who was more direct and defiant in leading his people through the American wilderness of white supremacy.

One additional important aspect of this transitional speech was its audience. Between 1963 and 1965, Wilmore had typically traveled south to engage in activism, and then returned north to explain the South's racial problems to northern whites, to secure their support for continued activism in the South. In August 1965 this dynamic was reversed. Wilmore visited a non-southern racial crisis, and then traveled to the South to explain this "foreign" racial situation to white southerners. Wilmore also gave a speech in support of interracial marriage at this conference, resulting in considerable negative southern press coverage.²⁹² That speech demonstrated Wilmore's increasingly radical, "fiery" public posture, to the chagrin of

conservative white Presbyterians. However, radical as that speech was, it was more in keeping with his job description: to press for justice among hostile, racist white Southerners. White United Presbyterians expected their race commission to shake up the South, but were not prepared for it to turn on them, to accuse them of police brutality and economic oppression. Later in the 1960s, the movement would become even less like the celebration at Selma, and more like the Watts/Montreat episode, bringing leaders like Wilmore into increasing conflict with the northern “white moderate.” By that time, public opinion had turned sharply against racial justice activism. In 1969, the United Presbyterian Church would find itself at odds with, indeed a target of racial justice demonstrators, who charged it with complicity in racial oppression and demanded that it pay reparations to African Americans. Among these demonstrators was Gayraud Wilmore, the head of the denomination’s own race commission.

Turning North

After Selma and Watts, Wilmore gradually turned his gaze northward, where he “roamed the cities where rioting and civil unrest occurred between 1964 and 1968, counseling our presbytery staffs and deploying our resources to meet emergencies, most notably in Rochester, Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit, and Washington, D.C.”²⁹³ Wilmore and CORAR shifted from a focus on bringing in “outsiders” to promote voting rights in the South, to one on addressing conditions in northern cities, including interpreting, responding to, sometimes justifying, and seeking to alleviate the social conditions behind the urban rebellions.

The shift to the North put Wilmore on his “own turf,” a welcome change which allowed him both to connect at a deeper level to the struggles of those for whom he advocated, and to

work more comfortably in a northern urban environment.²⁹⁴ Perhaps because of this connection, Wilmore said that he was not surprised when such northern urban rebellions occurred.

No, they didn't really come as a surprise to me, I felt the tension mounting, year after year after 1963, '64, '65, '66, one could feel the tension mounting, the summers were periods of great tension and desperation on the part of black people living in the ghetto. It was hot. When they talk about a "long hot summer," I think they're talking about climate as well as the tempers, and it was inevitable that it should explode.²⁹⁵

In terms of feeling more comfortable in the North and West than in the South, he said,

I think I was more fearful in the South than I was anywhere, because I came out of the ghetto of the North and I knew how to operate in those situations. I was not really familiar with Mississippi and Georgia and Alabama, I felt a little uneasy there.... But in Watts and Detroit, I felt that I was on my own turf, being a Northerner, and I knew how to maneuver and get around in those situations much better than in the rural areas of the South.²⁹⁶

Recall, for example, Wilmore and Rollins' uncertain attempt to evaluate which gas stations would serve them on the way from Montgomery to Atlanta. In the eyes of the white Northerner Tom Michael, "For my part, I was not able to tell the difference, but they had lived a lifetime of picking up on the subtle clues about where they could be served."²⁹⁷ Despite Michael's assumption that Wilmore and Rollins had similar life experiences, Wilmore may have felt almost as confused as Michael, while the Southerner Rollins would have been more adept at making such an assessment.

Wilmore's suggestion at Montreat that the Watts Rebellion was an indicator that the struggle was moving outside of the South - that these urban rebellions were "now the procedure by which Civil Rights leadership... seek to achieve the objective of racial justice" - also implied a lessened role for southern leaders like King and organizations like the SCLC. Wilmore had of course also suggested that "the Civil Rights leaders" - read "King and the SCLC" - did not

understand the struggles faced by urban slum residents of the North and West. Wilmore may also have previously felt overlooked by these Southerners, or at least been frustrated by the fact that he was not able to get through to them in order to advise them strategically.

I represented that part of the church's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement that was almost a silent partner of Dr. King. We never sat around the conference table, I did get into one or two staff meetings, through Andrew Young.... But I never got close enough to the leadership of SCLC to say to them what I'm saying to you about the strategic opportunity they had to recognize the white churches and thereby employ their resources more rationally. And more forcefully, to bring about some of the ends that Dr. King wanted to achieve.²⁹⁸

When asked whether the SCLC was ever receptive to a relationship with CORAR beyond receiving funds from it, Wilmore responded negatively, and said,

... they were mainly black Baptist preachers who did not know the black constituency of the predominantly white churches. They had no idea about that. You know, I was director of the Council on Church and Race of the United Presbyterian Church, and that couldn't mean a thing to them, I mean "who's he?," you know. They had no sense of what the potential of having a liaison relationship to somebody in that position. Dr. King later began to understand that and we met and talked about it at Montreat, at our first encounter with one another personally, but most of that time they overlooked the participation of people like myself, and we strove as best we could to be visible to them and to offer ourselves to them, but they didn't know how to use us.²⁹⁹

Wilmore said that King and other such leaders assumed that the main contact people among predominantly white denominations were their white leaders. "They related to Eugene Carson Blake.... And they related to [NCC CORAR Executive Director] Bob Spike.... But they did not relate to [NCC official] Oscar Lee and Gayraud Wilmore."³⁰⁰

In retrospect, Wilmore has suggested that the urban insurrections of the 1960s "lifted a curtain" to reveal a country "composed of two hostile nations, separate and unequal," and reflected favorably on "defending the barricades of Watts" as being part of a church "of hard-nosed political action," "on the radical edge of politics."³⁰¹ By 1965 Wilmore was transitioning

from the moderate integrationism of the early 1960s to an increasing radicalism and alignment with what would become known in 1966 as Black Power, albeit without distancing himself from Christianity or even from majority-white church institutions.

Shifting to a more northern focus increasingly brought Wilmore and CORAR into tension, not so much with white church leaders, but certainly with white laypeople. As previously stated, Wilmore's UPCUSA denomination consisted of white and black Presbyterians outside the South and black southern Presbyterians, while most white Presbyterians in the South belonged to another denomination, the PC (US). Many white northern Presbyterians were happy to support Wilmore and CORAR when their focus was on race as a "southern problem," as well as on issues like civil and voting rights, integration, and nonviolence. However, when Wilmore and CORAR developed concerns about economics, self-determination, and Black Power in the North, many of those white northern Presbyterians lost enthusiasm for church action on race. White northern Presbyterians did not want CORAR meddling in their own communities. In February 1963, Wilmore had held out hope for the development of "a new kind of white Protestant," "disenchanted with middle class complacency," who could "marshal sufficient resistance to the old ways to change the image of white Christianity," turning it into "a revolutionary force," and thereby "capture[ing] the imagination and loyalty of the new Negro."³⁰² However, it was not those comments, but his writings from December 1963 which would instead prove more prescient in relation to the latter half of the decade: "We have entered a new phase in the coalition between Negro leadership and the white liberal.... "White liberals are getting off the train."³⁰³

¹ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 91. Brackenridge inaccurately says, “and a non-segregated society.” The Federal Council of Churches (predecessor to the NCC) called in 1946 for a goal of a “nonsegregated church in a nonsegregated society,” language which came to be closely identified with the 1946-65 moderate, integrationist racial justice efforts of majority-white mainline churches. Wilmore, “Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations,” p. 101.

² Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 92.

³ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail - April 16, 1963,” Milton C. Sernett, ed., *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed. (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 526. See also Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers*.

⁴ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 92; Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, November 28, 2016 and March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 61-62; George, “A Firebell in the Night,” pp. 1, 6; Wilmore, “Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations,” p. 102; Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 238.

⁵ Gayraud Wilmore, Jr., “The New Commission on Race: What Exactly Was Launched?,” *Presbyterian Life*, November 15, 1963, pp. 25-26. Quoted in Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 91.

⁶ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111, Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 57-58; Bauer and Wilmore, “Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1”; George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 1.

⁷ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake: Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 92.

⁸ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 60.

⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

¹⁰ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

¹¹ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 233.

¹² George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

¹³ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

¹⁴ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6. Wilmore, like Hawkins, would later speak in King’s place at another Presbyterian event, the 1965 Christian Action Conference in Montreat, North Carolina, as Presbyterians sought to respond to and interpret not the Birmingham Campaign, but the Watts Rebellion.

¹⁵ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

¹⁶ Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 223.

¹⁷ George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

¹⁸ Murray, *Presbyterians and the Negro*, p. 233.

¹⁹ Wilmore, “Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations,” p. 17; Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47. Bauer and Wilmore, “Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1”; “Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design),” National Black Presbyterian Caucus.

As previously discussed, *Black and Presbyterian* says that Concerned Presbyterians was founded in 1964, as does the NBPC website. However, Wilmore used the 1963 date in his book chapter, “Identity and Integration,” and in his “Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations,” both of which seem more accurate than *Black and Presbyterian* or the NBPC website on these details. Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” pp. 222-223; Wilmore, “Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations,” p. 17.

²⁰ Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” pp. 222-223.

²¹ Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 224.

²² Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 224.

²³ Porter, interview by the author, West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017; McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²⁴ McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

“I know that [Hawkins] challenged me to leave the classroom. I said, ‘Edler, I’m on the verge of writing a dissertation. I’m getting ready to finish up my doctoral program. He said, you can go back to all of that, we need you now, to organize this program which the Des Moines Assembly has authorized. I want you to come to New York and do it.’” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

Elsewhere, Wilmore wrote that Hawkins and Bryant George came to Pittsburgh to ask him to take the CORAR position. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

³¹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

³² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

³³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

On tensions with Scott, see also Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” “[Scott] leaned to the national missions group, of course, because he had been one of their people, his institute was funded by [BNM], I believe, so that he tried to steer the Commission in the direction of a kind of adjunct mechanism to what the [BNM] already had on the urban scene. But he never could quite bring that off, because I was not an urban specialist, I didn’t come out of that mold, I came out of the, more, shall I say, conceptually oriented Christian Education mold, of pronouncement, development, the development of strategies within the judicatory structures, rather than on the edge of them, as the urban churchmen tended to work. So that he could not, although we were close friends and worked very well together, I felt that Marshal never sort of, never thought of me as one of his boys, so to speak. He had a lot of boys around in church, I was not a McCormick graduate, I had not, I’d gone to his Institute in lower Manhattan for one summer, so I had come through that....”

³⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁴⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 58-59.

On the exercise of power by black Presbyterians in CORAR: “... the blacks on that Commission, under the leadership of Edler Hawkins, were always able to develop a leadership role which transcended the bureaucratic interests of the boards and agencies that were involved. In other words, we made our decisions on other grounds, not what was good for National Missions or Christian Education or even for the United Presbyterian Church, but what we thought ought to be done for black folks, and what our church ought to be doing for black folks, and because of that I was never aware of any real obstacles to the exercise of power. Whatever we wanted to do, Edler worked it out so it could be done, and somehow or another got the approbation of the people who could have stopped it if they wanted to. Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁴¹ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 62.

⁴² Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 62.

He called CORAR “the most forthright effort of the white church to intersect with Dr. King.... with broad powers to bring the denomination, kicking and screaming if necessary, into the vortex of the race relations storm by trying to erect a nonsegregated, multiethnic church in a segregated, white-dominated, highly secular society.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

⁴³ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Brotherhood Month, 1963,” *Perspective*, pp. 4-5. This was a publication of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

⁴⁴ Wilmore, “Brotherhood Month, 1963,” pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵ Wilmore, “Brotherhood Month, 1963,” p. 5.

⁴⁶ Wilmore, “Brotherhood Month, 1963,” p. 5.

⁴⁷ Quoted in Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 219.

⁴⁸ Frank T. Wilson, Sr. described Hawkins in particular as having been influenced at Union by Reinhold Niebuhr, as well as by Paul Tillich. Wilson, Sr., “Black Presbyterians in Ministry,” p. 33.

LeRoy Patrick was a graduate of both Lincoln University and UTS. Ervin Dyer, “Obituary: The Rev. LeRoy Patrick/ Central figure in fighting racism in Pittsburgh, Nov. 17, 1915-Jan. 12, 2006,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 12, 2006, accessed August 16, 2019, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/obituaries/2006/01/13/Obituary-The-Rev-LeRoy-Patrick-Central-figure-in-fighting-racism-in-Pittsburgh/stories/200601130225>.

Eugene Adair was a third pastor to found a black Presbyterian church in northern New York City in the same era as Hawkins and Robinson, Mt. Morris Presbyterian in central Harlem, and the three churches and pastors were closely interrelated. Eugene Adair’s wife, Thelma C. Davidson Adair, was an elder and would become the first black female moderator of the United Presbyterian Church in 1976. Thelma C. D. Adair, “I Remember Edler” (*Church & Society*, November/December 1987, pp. 1-9), pp. 5-6, 8-9.

⁴⁹ “Lincoln Delegates at Swarthmore Confab.” These quotes are from the *The Lincolnian*’s paraphrase of White’s comments, not necessarily from White himself. “In reply to a question asked by Gayraud Wilmore, a Lincoln Delegate, as to the role of the Negro College in the conference, Mr. White replied that he felt that the Negro College should not exist and that as the purpose of the conference was to end discrimination the Negro College is an aspect of racial discrimination which is added [sic] and abetted by Negroes themselves.”

⁵⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church” (*The Christian Century*, February 6, 1963, pp. 168-171).

⁵¹ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 168.

⁵² Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 168.

⁵³ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 168.

⁵⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 168.

⁵⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” pp. 168-169.

⁵⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 169.

⁵⁷ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 169.

⁵⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 169. See also, in terms of a harsh critique of the white church which nevertheless holds out hope for integration and goodwill: “It is rapidly becoming a simple matter of self-respect for the Negro to refuse to bruise his knuckles perpetually on doors that white America refuses to open. This is an intolerable state of affairs for the Protestant churches, which for about a decade have been beating drums for a ‘nonsegregated church in a nonsegregated society.’ But it is nonetheless just such a state of affairs that the church faces in large sectors of the Negro community.”

Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁵⁹ King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail - April 16, 1963,” p. 519.

⁶⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1978, pp. 9-10.

⁶¹ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 169.

⁶² King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” pp. 7-8.

⁶³ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” pp. 169-170.

⁶⁴ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁶⁵ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁶⁶ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁶⁷ Compare King in 1956, “Actually, the Negro has been betrayed by both the Republican and the Democratic Party. The Democrats have betrayed him by capitulating to the whims and caprices of the southern Dixiecrats. The Republicans have betrayed him by capitulating to the blatant hypocrisy of reactionary right-wing northern Republicans.” Martin Luther King, Jr., “‘Desegregation and the Future’ Address Delivered at the Annual Luncheon of the National Committee for Rural Schools,” New York, New York, December 15, 1956?, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/desegregation-and-future-address-delivered-annual-luncheon-national-committee>.

Compare also John Lewis at the 1963 MOW, “My friends, let us not forget that we are involved in a serious social revolution. By and large, American politics is dominated by politicians who build their careers on immoral compromises and ally themselves with open forms of political, economic, and social exploitation. There are exceptions, of course. We salute those. But what political leader can stand up and say, “My party is the party of principles”? For the party of Kennedy is also the party of Eastland. The party of Javits is also the party of Goldwater. Where is our party? Where is the political party that will make it unnecessary to march on Washington? Where is the political party that will make it unnecessary to march in the streets of Birmingham? Where is the political party that will protect the citizens of Albany, Georgia?”

Compare also, in terms of revolution:

“I appeal to all of you to get into this great revolution that is sweeping this nation. Get in and stay in the streets of every city, every village and hamlet of this nation until true freedom comes, until the revolution of 1776 is complete. We must get in this revolution and complete the revolution. For in the Delta in Mississippi, in southwest Georgia, in the Black Belt of Alabama, in Harlem, in Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and all over this nation, the black masses are on the march for jobs and freedom. They’re talking about slow down and stop. We will not stop. All of the forces of Eastland, Barnett, Wallace, and Thurmond will not stop this revolution.” John Lewis, “Speech at the March on Washington,” August 28, 1963, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-speech-text/>.

⁶⁸ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁶⁹ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 153.

⁷⁰ Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, p. 153.

⁷¹ Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

⁷² Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” p. 170.

“If a rapprochement develops between the revolutionary Negro laity and the white Protestant laity in the next few years, it will not be because the ranks have closed to protect America from communism, or because ‘creeping desegregation’ has finally caught up with both white and Negro churches, or because through sharing white neighborhoods, schools and churches Negroes have become ‘acceptable’ to whites. It will develop because Christian brotherhood in America has come to mean a relationship which seeks to build upon the rubble of an irrelevant spirituality a new barrier against the tragic disillusionments of a post-Christian age, and because white Protestants have finally realized the truth of Richard Wright’s affirmation that ‘the ties that bind us are deeper than those that separate us’ Christian brotherhood will then mean something profoundly human and incisively political; it will mean standing with and for one another in the exasperating and bewildering realities of secular life. This is what the new Negro - and many ‘new’ white Christians - want from the church.” Wilmore, Jr., “The New Negro and the Church,” pp. 170-171.

⁷³ See Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 58, on other race committees’ subordination of African Americans to white leadership. However, for another side of this, see Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

“We were carried along by the momentum of the events itself. We started off running, first thing we had to do was catch up with Dr. King. That, that phrase was used several times I recall. ‘The United Presbyterian Church has to catch up with Dr. King.’ Which meant that we had to get people on the field and meet him where he was, and try to interlock our resources in with the [SCLC]. We had to do the same thing with respect to the National Council’s [CORAR], which had removed Oscar Lee in favor of a young, quasi-radical [UCC] minister, Bob Spike, and Bob had started off running, where Oscar had been moving more cautiously and slowly. I think I rather favored Bob’s leadership than Oscar’s during that time, although I commiserated hours with Oscar, at 475 [Riverside Drive] about how he was being eclipsed.” Note here Wilmore’s use, again of the prefix “quasi-.”

⁷⁴ Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 58-59.

⁷⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017. Note Wilmore’s use, again, of the word, “maelstrom.”

⁷⁶ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 62.

⁷⁷ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 62; George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 6.

⁷⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁷⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 62.

⁸⁰ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 63.

⁸¹ Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 58, 59.

⁸² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁸³ Tom Michael, “The March to Montgomery, 1965,” January 18, 2015, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://annemichael.wordpress.com/2015/01/18/guest-blogger-memoir/>.

Michael was “a 32-year-old co-pastor of a tall steeple church, First Westminster Presbyterian Church in Yonkers, New York.” Prior to Selma, he recalled, “The call had come out from our denominational national committee on religion and race to ask clergy and laymen to participate in demonstrations throughout the South supporting voting rights for Black citizens. Small groups of ministers were asked to march around the courthouse in Philadelphia, Mississippi. My colleague and I flipped a coin and my colleague went down there. It was a potentially dangerous task, but he was able to return home safely. After the first march from Selma was halted by police on the Pettus Bridge, they asked for volunteers to join the Freedom Marchers.... It was my turn to go.”

⁸⁴ Michael, “The March to Montgomery, 1965.”

⁸⁵ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 63.

⁸⁶ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 63; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁸⁷ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 63.

⁸⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁸⁹ This white staffer, Bob Beech, was a Presbyterian minister from Illinois, hired by CORAR specifically to be the on-site supervisor of the HMP. Beech moved with his family to Hattiesburg for “almost a year.” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹¹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹³ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁹⁹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

Wilmore: “I was aware of support, the prayers, and genuine concern and goodwill of black Presbyterian ministers. Even though we did not see them in the field as frequently as we did whites. Some of them did get to Mississippi to the Hattiesburg Project, stayed for a short time and then left. Some of them I saw at marches, we’d greet one another, walk together for awhile. After [the National Conference of Black Churchmen] was organized [in 1966], they would show up there. Black Presbyterian churches never were involved, I supposed I could say, with the kind of money and official representation in the movement that I suppose some white churches were able to bring, because of their size and because of their financial ability to send their minister if he indeed he was sent, or to make a contribution of several hundred dollars by check to something we were doing.”

McCloud: “Or if they were involved they were more likely to be involved in the community where they were, say a place like Orangeburg South Carolina, and J. Herbert Nelson, or Rocky Mount North Carolina and Jim Costen.”

Wilmore: “Yes.... Or Reggie Hawkins in Charlotte, North Carolina. I was very much aware of the participation of black Presbyterians in the South in the struggle, at precisely the points that you have mentioned. I was not as much aware of black Presbyterian participation in the North, for example in Detroit and Newark, New Jersey and Watts, and so forth. That was of course, well, it was the same period, little later I guess. The riots were from about ’64 to ’67, and there we looked to black Presbyterian churches’ support, and food distribution, strategizing, getting Presbyterian laymen involved in leadership cadres that were trying to bring some kind of order out of the disorder of the rebellions themselves. And I was on the street at Newark, and Watts, and in the Detroit riot, trying to get Presbyterian churches in those areas to participate....”

¹⁰¹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰³ McCloud, interviewed by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, p. 182.

¹⁰⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹⁰⁸ Michael, “The March to Montgomery, 1965.”

¹⁰⁹ Liuzzo faced hostility at a gas station that same night, prior to being run off the road and murdered.

¹¹⁰ Michael, “The March to Montgomery, 1965.”

¹¹¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

¹¹² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹¹³ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59.

¹¹⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹¹⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹¹⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹¹⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 59, 63.

¹¹⁸ Wilmore, *Recollections*, p. 59.

“I guess Bob was very important in Edler’s early campaign for moderator, and Edler came to me, said ‘Gay, I would like to see Bob Stone get that second staff position.’ I was not for it because I hadn’t met the man, and he impressed me with a certain kind of aloofness and supercilious attitude toward me. He too came out of that [Board of] National Missions urban church coterie, and I was not known among them, and therefore he didn’t respect me as one who had been through the fires with some of the men who had been involved in that. That whole period, I guess that was the [Saul] Alinsky period... a lot of them knew Alinsky and had been trained by him. I hadn’t. But Bob and I worked out fairly well although I had to straighten him out two or three times. And I was not sorry when he finally left.” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

“Early on I felt that Bob was forced on me by Hawkins, before he became the co-chair of the commission. Hawkins told me that he wanted me to bring Stone on the staff. He had received strong support from Bob in the Presbytery of New York and expected his support in his second and successful drive to become the first black moderator of the church in 1964. I was glad to accommodate him. Stone’s background and orientation, however, were directly opposite mine. He had been a big city pastor, embroiled in the politics of the Presbytery of New York, and committed to the radical style of the East Harlem Protestant Parish that was duly celebrated by white liberals during that period. Perhaps most importantly, Stone was a private person who kept his own counsel and carried on relationships, unbeknownst to me, with Bob Spike of the NCC CORAR, with Bob Beech, a Presbyterian minister from Illinois who we hired to direct our program in Hattiesburg; and with the charismatic Bob Moses [of SNCC]... [Because of the West Chester conflict with Bob Boell, I] was leery of white clergy who presumed to know more about black people than we knew about ourselves... I mentioned my uneasiness to Hawkins who pretended not to notice. The great man who personified the bold leap forward of the church in 1963 remained silent on the subject and responded to my complaint with a furtive shrug. So when I had enough of being undermined by the Reverend Robert J. Stone, I fired him... For the record I want to aver that I always respected Stone’s knowledge of the urban mission and his indefatigable energy in helping us to coordinate with Spike in the Mississippi Summer Program of 1964. He and I had some good moments together. But we came out of different perspectives about the management of the racial justice agenda, and I simply could not trust what he was doing behind my back. I am sorry that Bob Stone is no longer living and cannot tell his own side of this story.” Wilmore, “*Recollections*,” pp. 59-60.

It is perhaps unsurprising that ongoing private conversations among the three Bobs - Stone, Beech, and Moses - would have reminded Wilmore of a fourth Bob (Boell) who had given Wilmore the impression of talking about him behind his back.

¹¹⁹ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins,” *The HistoryMakers*, September 14, 2007, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-joseph-metz-rollins>.

¹²⁰ Fred Heuser, “Rollins and Wilmore,” *Presbyterian Historical Society* blog, February 16, 2012, accessed August 17, 2019, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/rollins-and-wilmore>; “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins.”

¹²¹ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins.”

¹²² “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins.”

¹²³ “Rollins and Wilmore”; “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins”; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹²⁴ “Rollins and Wilmore.”

¹²⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

¹²⁶ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins.”

¹²⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” In this interview, Wilmore referred to the march’s destination as “Jackson,” before correcting himself.

¹²⁸ “Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins.”

¹²⁹ Wilmore, “*Recollections*,” p. 58.

¹³⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation” (*Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 90, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2012, pp. 23-24), p. 23; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 58. The NCC included non-white persons and churches, and non-mainline bodies, but was predominantly both white and mainline. The official speakers at the MOW were “The Big Ten,” which included “The Big Six” Civil Rights leaders, Walter Reuther of the UAW, and three white religious leaders, including one Catholic, one Jew, and one Protestant (Blake). There also several other less “official” speakers, such as Daisy Bates.

¹³¹ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, pp. 92-93.

¹³² Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 93.

¹³³ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 93.

¹³⁴ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 93.

¹³⁵ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 93.

¹³⁶ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 93.

¹³⁷ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 94.

¹³⁸ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 95.

¹³⁹ Brackenridge, *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*, p. 96.

¹⁴⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].” Wilmore also pointed out, in this interview, that Blake’s Baltimore protest helped “authenticate him to the top Civil Rights leadership,” to give him “some kind of verification of his right to claim titular leadership of American Christendom, or of American Protestantism at least. . . . After that time I think Gene Blake became the real leader of the Christian forces or shall we say the church troops in the Civil Rights Movement.” Note Wilmore’s use of militaristic language here.

¹⁴¹ Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation,” p. 23; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 58.

¹⁴² Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation,” p. 23.

¹⁴³ Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation,” p. 23; Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 58.

¹⁴⁴ Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation,” p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ Wilmore, “Custodians of the gospel of liberation,” p. 24.

¹⁴⁶ Gary Gerstle, *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 270, 284-295.

¹⁴⁷ David Halberstam, *The Children* (New York: Random House, 1998), pp. 204-209.

¹⁴⁸ Quoted in Halberstam, *The Children*, p. 451, and in Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p. 284. See also James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Washington, D.C.: Open Hand Publishing, 1985), pp. 331-337; John Lewis with Michael D’Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998), pp. 202-231.

¹⁴⁹ Lewis, working closely with James Forman, did not relent to this pressure “until minutes before” the speech. Blake also objected to Lewis’ use of the term “revolution,” though A. Philip Randolph interceded to allow that term to stay in Lewis’ speech. Recall Wilmore’s use of “revolutionary” in his early 1963 article, “The New Negro and the Church.” Martin Luther King, Jr. told Lewis that the Sherman phrase “doesn’t sound like you,” and he was right: according to David Halberstam, Lewis had added it at the suggestion of Forman. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p. 284; Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, pp. 225-227; Halberstam, *The Children*, p. 453.

However, elsewhere Lewis has said that Tom Kahn, an assistant to Bayard Rustin, suggested the line about Sherman. Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, pp. 218-219.

According to Gerstle, “the veneer of unity at the march was preserved, allowing King, who spoke after Lewis, to define this moment as one of great advance for America’s civic creed and for dreams of colorblind brotherhood. In the months that followed the march, the fissures in the civil rights movement only widened.” Gerstle, *American Crucible*, p. 284.

¹⁵⁰ The tensions present at the MOW between black activists and white moderates also grew in 1964, as seen in the conflict between the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, personified by Fannie Lou Hamer, and party leadership, personified by President Lyndon B. Johnson, at the 1964 Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Gerstle, *American Crucible*, pp. 286-295. Note also that black Presbyterians (re-)created their own black caucus as “Concerned Presbyterians” in 1963, in response to white paternalism and as a way to elect black people to positions of power, rather than simply trusting white allies to exercise power on behalf of black people.

-
- 151 Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”
- 152 Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”
- 153 Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt” (*Social Progress*, Vol. LIV, No. 4, December 1963, pp. 7-11).
- 154 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 8.
- 155 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 7.
- 156 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 9.
- 157 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 9.
- 158 According to the newspaper’s paraphrase, he “called for a restoration of responsible Negro leadership,” and “stated that both white and Negro liberals are losing their ability to lead.” “The white liberals are ‘getting off the train’ Dr. Wilmore quoted the Rev. Martin Luther King as saying. Dr. Wilmore said that it is characteristic of race relations liberals to believe in an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, approach to social progress; to dislike violence; and to have faith in the rational approach....” “In Address at Wilson, Dr. C. S. Cilmore [sic] Says Liberals Losing Ability to Lead” (*Public Opinion*, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1963, p. 1). It is not clear which “Negro leader” Wilmore was quoting in “The Negro Revolt.” *Public Opinion* pointed to King, but I have found no similar King citation, and the plain language of the quote in “The Negro Revolt” indicates that King was not the leader quoted. Therefore the newspaper may have mixed up that particular quote with Wilmore’s general endorsement of King’s critique of the “white moderate” in “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” It is also curious that Wilmore did not say in “The Negro Revolt” which “Negro” leader he was quoting, especially if that leader was King. Wilmore might have declined to identify this source because they were an obscure or controversial figure. One of the latter would have been Malcolm X, who gave a speech at the University of California at Berkeley on October 11, 1963, in which he indeed lambasted white liberals, especially outside the South, characterizing them as foxes who “pose as your friend,” unlike the openly hostile white wolves of the South. Malcolm X at U.C. Berkeley (October 11, 1963),” accessed August 17, 2019, <http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2013/06/uc-berkeley-october-11-1963.html>.
- 159 Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man & Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
- 160 Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 57.
- 161 “There is a difference between a revolt and a revolution. Black people did not change the political and economic hegemony of white people in the United States during this period, nor did they dismantle the machinery of government and bring into existence a new social contract. But for one exceptional period, beginning with a spectacular boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, sporadic but persistent resistance to racial discrimination by African Americans, led to significant changes in the way blacks and whites regarded themselves and each other. Consequently, this nation experienced unprecedented gains in the long struggle for racial justice.” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 57.
- 162 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 9.
- 163 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 9.
- 164 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” pp. 9-10.
- 165 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.
- 166 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.
- 167 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.
- 168 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.
- 169 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 11.
- 170 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” pp. 10-11.
- 171 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 9.
- 172 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.
- 173 Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 11.

¹⁷⁴ Also in this vein of the challenges faced by black leaders acting as patrons or representatives of the masses in the black power era, note the following: “‘Freedom now!’ is a cry of longing for liberation, but it is also, and more importantly, a shout of defiance. If not in Birmingham itself, at least on the national level, the demands of King, Shuttlesworth, and Northern leaders like Cecil Moore, of Philadelphia, are thrusts [sic] up and out of the pressure cooker of the desperate mass movements under them. They can do nothing else and retain control. King... spoke of his alarm about what this condition may lead to if redress is withheld from the Negro people.... He has a tiger by the tail and he knows it. The younger leadership of the desegregation movement is not impressed by the majesty of the nonviolent witness. They will not be kept from the streets, the jails, and ultimately the morgues, if it must come to that, by the white liberal’s plea for perspective and strategic retreats.” Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 11.

¹⁷⁵ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording],” recorded in 1964 in the Board Room of the Board of National Missions, Interchurch Center, New York, New York, 4 sound tape reels, housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The identifying information on the recording also says, “Conversations between Malcolm X and executives from various Presbyterian agencies and boards. Executives present include: Dr. Archie R. Crouch, Rev. Bryant George, Dr. Kenneth Neigh, Dr. David Ramage, Dr. Harry Stearns, Rev. Matthew H. Thies, Dr. Gayraud S. Willmore [sic] Jr. Others present have not been identified.”

The recording is dated 1964, but does not indicate a month or year. However, X’s views as expressed in the recording matched his positions after he left the Nation of Islam and began seeking closer cooperation with other Civil Rights organizations in March 1964. X was overseas on the Hajj in April and May, and again was overseas from July to December of that year. The recording also included discussion about what was likely to happen during the 1964 year in terms of Civil Rights developments, thus implying that it was recorded in the early part of that year.

¹⁷⁶ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁷⁷ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁷⁸ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁷⁹ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸⁰ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸¹ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸² Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸³ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸⁴ Malcolm X, “[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording].”

¹⁸⁵ *Book of Confessions: Study Edition: Part I of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996), p. 315.

¹⁸⁶ *Book of Confessions*, pp. 315-316.

¹⁸⁷ *Book of Confessions*, p. 316. Actually, three denominations considered a merger - the PC (USA), the UPCNA, and the PC (US), and all three General Assemblies passed the Plan of Union in 1954. However, the PC (US) did not achieve the three-fourths majority of presbytery votes necessary to ratify the plan. The PC (USA) and the UPCNA then passed and ratified a new Plan of Union in 1956, which took effect in 1958. The 1956 PC (USA)’s G.A. appointed the “Special Committee on a Brief Statement of Faith,” which first met in November 1958. John Wilkinson, “The Making of the Confession of 1967” (*Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 26-40), pp. 26-27.

¹⁸⁸ Wilkinson, “The Making of the Confession of 1967,” p. 33; Christian T. Iosso, “The Hope and Challenge of Reconciliation: A Call to Reclaim the Confession of 1967” (*Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 3-8), p. 5.

¹⁸⁹ Wilmore identified Herbert King, a homileitian at McCormick Theological Seminary, as the only other black professor at a predominantly white U.S. Presbyterian seminary at the time. Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50. However, Wilmore did not start at PTS or Drew until 1960, so he was actually selected to be on this committee while he was an SEA staffer, prior to joining the PTS faculty.

¹⁹⁰ Wilkinson, “The Making of the Confession of 1967,” p. 32.

¹⁹¹ John Wilkinson, “Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967” (*The Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 82, No. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 5-22), p. 6.

¹⁹² The confessions included were the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, the Scots Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, the Second Helvetic Confession, the Westminster Confession (including its Shorter and Larger Catechisms), and the Theological Declaration of Barmen, as well as the new "Confession of 1967." *Book of Confessions*, p. 321.

¹⁹³ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 6.

¹⁹⁴ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 7. "Little public documentation exists as to the selection of the committee. In a personal interview, Dowey suggested that the outgoing moderator of the union General Assembly, Theophilus Taylor, appointed the committee, and that Dowey's name was recommended to Taylor by Eugene Carson Blake...." Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 20 (endnote 5). It is fitting, therefore, that Wilmore's mixed feelings about Blake's leadership of the denomination paralleled his feelings about Dowey's leadership of this committee.

As of 2019, the 97-year-old Wilmore is probably the only member of the Dowey-led "Special Committee" still living. I can confirm that at least thirteen of the other sixteen members have died. I have not been able to confirm whether Calvin DeVries, Kenneth Reeves, or Charles C. West are still living.

¹⁹⁵ Drafting began in February 1960. Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 9; Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 29.

¹⁹⁶ Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 30. They met in October 1964, and then for "long meetings" in January and February 1965. The title, "The Confession of 1967," became official in January 1965. Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," pp. 31-32.

¹⁹⁸ *Book of Confessions*, p. 316; Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 39; Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 11.

¹⁹⁹ *Book of Confessions*, p. 316; Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 39.

²⁰⁰ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

²⁰¹ *Book of Confessions*, p. 318.

²⁰² *Book of Confessions*, pp. 318, 327.

²⁰³ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," pp. 9-10; Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 29. The term "reconciliation" first appeared in a draft written by Dowey in May 1960. In November 1960 the committee began considering it as a central theme, at the suggestion of Leonard J. Trinterud. "Restoration" was another alternative term the committee considered.

²⁰⁴ In 1988, Dowey argued that the committee used "reconciliation" as a synonym, and in fact the biblical term, for justification by grace through faith. Dowey even seemed to suggest that the committee meant the term *only* in that sense, and *not* in connection to social action. "A Conversation with Edward A. Dowey" (*The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 2, 1988, pp. 89-103), p. 99.

However, in 1960, Dowey had argued that this theme, rather than redemption or restoration, was "timely and appropriate... and most relevant to our own time." Special Committee Minutes, November 17-20, 1960, quoted in Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 10.

The term therefore had both theological and social valences and purposes. Theology and social concerns, of course, are not mutually exclusive.

²⁰⁵ Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 50.

²⁰⁶ Wilmore, Jr., "Brotherhood Month, 1963," pp. 4-5.

²⁰⁷ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 10; Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 29.

²⁰⁸ Wilkinson, "The Making of the Confession of 1967," pp. 29-30. Wilkinson is quoting from "Minutes, Apr. 25-27, 1963, Wilmore, 'Preface Draft,' and Barth, 'The Racial Issue.'"

²⁰⁹ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 10.

²¹⁰ Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 15; *Book of Confessions*, pp. 327-329.

²¹¹ *Book of Confessions*, pp. 328-329; Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," p. 15; Janet Harbison Penfield, "On the Road to C-67" (*Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, Vol. IX, No. 2, 1988, pp. 104-108), p. 106.

²¹² Wilkinson, "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967," pp. 14-15.

²¹³ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 49.

²¹⁴ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50.

²¹⁵ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50. Regarding Ed Dowey, see also Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, eds., *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.*, Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990.

²¹⁶ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50. Wilmore did not mention Lincoln University’s seminary, but it also would have had black professors until it closed in 1959. The same was true of historically black Presbyterian colleges and universities.

²¹⁷ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 50.

²¹⁸ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 52.

In another example of similar dynamics, Wilmore recalled, “The World Council of Churches’ consultation that I chaired in Europe on Racism in Theology and Theology Against Racism might also be unearthed to deepen this point, although it was left out of the report at the Stravanger meeting of the WCC’s Faith and Order Commission. I raised the question there as to why it was left out. Today I believe it was left out because it was considered too radical an indictment of Christianity or Christianity in the West, or of authoritative WCC documents particularly. It could not be sent to the member communions. Again I was the only Black person representing the Presbyterian Church on the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches, and I had somewhat the same experience of isolation there.” Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 54. “For many years [Wilmore] was the representative of the Presbyterian Church (USA) on the Standing Commission of the World Council of Churches’ Commission on Faith and Order,” including chairing this 1983 consultation in Geneva “which produced the WCC study, ‘Racism in Theology and Theology Against Racism.’” Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

²¹⁹ Gayraud S. Wilmore and Edward M. Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice,” Symposium on the Confession of 1967: Contemporary Implications, October 22, 1982, audio-recording, recorded in the Main Lounge, Mackay Campus Center, Princeton Theological Seminary, accessed August 17, 2019, <http://commons.ptsem.edu/id/05524>. Wilmore was the principal speaker and Heunemann his respondent. Wilmore was reporting, secondhand, comments by Dowey. Dowey then arrived late to the Wilmore’s talk and therefore missed some of what was said. Wilmore then summarized his relevant comments for Dowey’s benefit, and Dowey then engaged with Wilmore from the audience.

²²⁰ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²¹ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²² Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²³ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁴ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁵ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁶ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁷ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁸ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²²⁹ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

²³⁰ Wilmore and Jones, “Race, Remembrance and the New Charge,” p. 49.

²³¹ Penfield, “On the Road to C-67,” p. 105. Harbison changed her name to Janet Harbison Penfield upon her 1970 marriage to the Rev. Thornton Penfield, Jr. “Obituaries: Janet G. H. Penfield” (*Town Topics*, Princeton, New Jersey, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, January 28, 2004, accessed August 17, 2019, <http://www.towntopics.com/jan2804/obits.html>).

²³² Penfield, “On the Road to C-67,” p. 106.

²³³ Penfield, “On the Road to C-67,” p. 106.

²³⁴ Janet Harbison, “The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.” (*Presbyterian Life*, September 1, 1968, pp. 7-9, 33).

²³⁵ “But for creating and pushing through two General Assemblies the Confession of 1967, for being willing to sacrifice the time and energy it took to hear out critics coming from all directions, and reconcile wildly divergent points of view, Edward Dowey truly deserves to be put up in stained glass.” Penfield, “On the Road to C-67,” p. 108.

-
- 236 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 49.
- 237 She lived in nearby Monroe Village beginning in the 1970s. "Obituaries: Janet G. H. Penfield."
- 238 "Obituaries: Janet G. H. Penfield."
- 239 "Obituaries: Janet G. H. Penfield"; Penfield, "On the Road to C-67," p. 104.
- 240 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," pp. 50-51.
- 241 Wilmore wrote that Charles C. West, the Princeton Theological Seminary professor with whom he was closest, "was a missionary who understood, as many missionaries do, the importance of diversity within the church, and the importance of the struggle for justice and liberation in the Third World. He saw us African Americans as part of that Third World struggle." On the other hand, Wilmore saw Princeton Theological Seminary professor George S. Hendry, "an older Scotsman and Princeton expert on the Westminster Confession," as a better example of the committee as a whole in its focus on Calvinism to such an extent as to miss the import of major contemporary racial/social changes. Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 53.
- 242 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," pp. 51-52.
- 243 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 53.
- 244 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 53.
- 245 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," pp. 53-54.
- 246 Wilmore and Jones, "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge," p. 54; George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Scribner, 1965).
- 247 Gayraud S. Wilmore and Edward A. Dowey, Jr., "What Do We Hope for in the Remaining Time?," Symposium on the Confession of 1967: Contemporary Implications, October 22, 1982, audio-recording, recorded in Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary, accessed August 18, 2019, <http://commons.ptsem.edu/id/05523>. This recording contains the symposium's closing worship, preached by Wilmore, which was preceded by a "Summary Statement" on the symposium by Dowey.
- 248 Wilmore and Dowey, Jr., "What Do We Hope for in the Remaining Time?"
- 249 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 250 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 251 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 252 Wilmore, "Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations," pp. 100-101.
- 253 Wilmore, "Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations," p. 101.
- 254 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 255 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 256 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 257 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice." Wilmore co-wrote this July 31, 1966 statement, and co-founded its sponsoring organization, the National Committee of Negro Churchmen - later the National Conference of Black Churchmen, or NCBC (see Chapter 4).
- 258 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 259 Wilmore and Huenemann, "Path toward Racial Justice."
- 260 The same is true of the term "colorblindness."

²⁶¹ Wilmore and Dowey, Jr., “What Do We Hope for in the Remaining Time?” The prayer Wilmore said after his sermon referred to the “groaning and travail of a new world struggling to be born,” drawing on his favorite scriptural passage, Romans 8:22. The text for Wilmore’s sermon was to begin with Ephesians 6:10 regarding the “armor of god,” but due to a miscommunication, the liturgist instead read Ephesians 6:1-10, which include instructions for children and parents as well as, three infamous verses on slavery:

“Slaves, obey your earthly master, with fear and trembling, single-mindedly, as serving Christ. Do not offer merely the outward show of service to curry favor with all people, but as slaves of Christ, do wholeheartedly the will of God. Give the cheerful service of those who serve the Lord, not humanity, for you know that whatever good each person may do, slave or free, will be repaid to them by the Lord. You masters also must do the same to them. Give up using threats. Remember you both have the same master in heaven, and he has no favorites.”

It is not clear what translation was being used. This error was coincidental, but it poetically underscored some the challenges Wilmore faced in his work in the Presbyterian Church, in which he had to deal both with being misunderstood, and with the racism and white supremacy which were a significant part of that institution and culture.

²⁶² Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, pp. 141-143.

²⁶³ Gayraud Wilmore, “Selma: Memories and an Exhortation” (*Christianity and Crisis* 50, No. 3, May 5, 1990, pp. 51-52), p. 51.

²⁶⁴ Wilmore, “Selma,” p. 52.

²⁶⁵ Wilmore, “Selma,” p. 52.

²⁶⁶ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, pp. 184-185.

²⁶⁷ Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, p. 185.

²⁶⁸ The LAPD at the time included two hundred white and just five black police officers. Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, pp. 185-186; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*, 3rd ed. (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007), p. 90.

²⁶⁹ Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, p. 90.

²⁷⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, “L.A.: peace or pacification” (*Christianity and Crisis* 52, No. 8, May 25, 1992, pp. 163-164), p. 163.

²⁷¹ Wilmore, “L.A.: peace or pacification,” p. 163. For another account of this incident, and of a similar incident in Watts in which local non-Presbyterian black people stopped a black gang from another neighborhood from burning down a black Presbyterian church, see Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 15-16.

For yet a third account of the Hell’s Angels incident in Watts, see Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]”:

Wilmore: “I was at Watts when some of our laypeople and other denominational people put up a barricade against the motorcycle, what was that name of that motorcycle gang in L.A.?”

McCloud: “Hell’s Angels?”

Wilmore: “Hell’s Angels. Yeah, who were going to come into the community and shoot it up. Some of us got out and put up a barricade, and the women were bringing coffee all night, well I was right in the thing, in that, and being there was a kind of a symbol of the presence of the United Presbyterian Church in that situation. We may have only had one or two ministers that we could call on to participate, but the leadership knew that the national Presbyterian Church was concerned and had its own person there, who not only represented the denomination, but also had some resources to make available....”

²⁷² “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says,” *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 18, 1965, p. B19, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

²⁷³ “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says.”

²⁷⁴ “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says.”

²⁷⁵ “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says.”

²⁷⁶ “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says.”

²⁷⁷ “L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says.”

²⁷⁸ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 134.

²⁷⁹ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 134-135.

²⁸⁰ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 129-144; Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965"; Martin Luther King, Jr., "Address by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Aug 21, 1965" in Malcolm Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand* (Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 256-273). See also Alvis, *Religion & Race*, p. 114.

²⁸¹ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 135.

²⁸² Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," pp. 248-249.

²⁸³ He admitted the presence of a "mob psychology" in the riots, but noted that similar "hysteria" can take hold at a football game or among "young, wealthy white boys and girls at the Newport Jazz Festival." Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," p. 250.

²⁸⁴ Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," p. 251.

²⁸⁵ Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," p. 251.

²⁸⁶ Wilmore, Jr., "The Negro Revolt," p. 11.

²⁸⁷ Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," p. 251.

²⁸⁸ Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," p. 251.

²⁸⁹ As previously noted, Wilmore's father lost his real estate business in the Great Depression and in general lacked stable employment. His mother was a domestic worker. Wilmore used similar language elsewhere, this time in an explicitly autobiographical sense: "Mother worked in the kitchens of rich people in the suburbs," "Father walked the streets, looking for work. I became acquainted with the emasculation of the black man at a very early age." Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8.

See also Wilson, Sr., *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*, p. 44:

"This became a kind of conceptual framework... in his search for purpose and meaning in human history and in the thwarted and constricted existence of black peoples in the ghettos of Philadelphia. The Wilmore family, mother, father and three sons, was familiar with, though not totally hardened by the various manifestations of racism, with all its attendant iniquities of hostility, discrimination, economic injustice, political exploitation and legal oppression. Gay saw emasculating effects of these forces upon the efforts of his father in business, in general employment and in his struggle to maintain the image of dignity and self-respect as head of the family. To all of this, the oldest son in the family reacted with almost vehement disgust and resentment."

²⁹⁰ Wilmore, "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965," pp. 251-252.

²⁹¹ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 135.

²⁹² Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 135-136, 142; Gayraud Wilmore, "Second Address: 'Racism - Some Historical and Theological Considerations of the American Situation,' August 20, 1965," in Malcolm Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand* (Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 252-253), p. 252; Alvis, *Religion & Race*, p. 114.

²⁹³ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 59.

²⁹⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

²⁹⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

²⁹⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

²⁹⁷ Michael, "The March to Montgomery, 1965."

²⁹⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

²⁹⁹ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

³⁰⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

³⁰¹ Wilmore, "L. A.: peace or pacification," pp. 163-164.

³⁰² Wilmore, Jr., "The New Negro and the Church," p. 170.

³⁰³ Wilmore, Jr., "The Negro Revolt," p. 8.

CHAPTER 4

BLACK POWER, BLACK CAUCUSES, BLACK THEOLOGY, AND “THE WHITE PROBLEM,” 1966-68

Black Power and the Founding of the National Conference of Black Churchmen

As the Civil Rights Movement’s focus turned toward northern, urban contexts in the mid-1960s, and as tensions grew between black racial justice activists and northern white liberals, some of those tensions manifested themselves in personal, as well as political ways. In Gayraud Wilmore’s case, he recalled that at this point he became less “proactive in relations with my white co-workers and administrative superiors, and more inclined to Black associations....”¹ One example of this dynamic was Wilmore’s satisfaction at the replacement of Marshal L. Scott by Edler G. Hawkins as chair of the Commission on Religion and Race (CORAR). Another was Wilmore’s decision to stop attending meetings of the C67 drafting committee. Yet a third was his firing of Bob Stone. Wilmore had described his strained relationship with Stone in racial terms, noting that he was “leery of white clergy who presumed to know more about black people than we knew about ourselves.”² Wilmore no longer deferred to white allies like Scott, Stone, Edward A. Dowey, Jr., or even Eugene Carson Blake. A similar transition also took place in the leadership of the National Council of Churches’ Commission on Religion and Race (NCC’s CORAR). Wilmore had been ambivalent about the leadership of Robert W. “Bob” Spike, who, like Wilmore, had become his organization’s inaugural executive director in 1963. Wilmore had also been sympathetic to longtime black NCC official J. Oscar Lee’s frustration at being overlooked for that position in favor of a white man. When Spike resigned from his post in

January 1966 to take a faculty position at Chicago Divinity School, Wilmore was pleased to learn that he would be replaced by a black director, and one with whom Wilmore would soon develop a strong personal bond: Benjamin F. Payton.³

On June 16, 1966, in the midst of the three-week-long Memphis-to-Jackson “March Against Fear,” Stokely Carmichael began popularizing a new term and phase of the movement known as “Black Power.” Wilmore participated in the march, and on the day of his return from it, addressed a chapter of the Presbyterian Interracial Council (PIC), meeting at his home church in Philadelphia, Tioga United Presbyterian (into which McDowell Community Presbyterian had merged in the 1950s), where he expressed his enthusiasm for the march’s contributions.⁴ He called the march “significant and successful,” and said, “it breathed new life into the civil rights movement in Mississippi.”⁵ Metz Rollins, Oscar McCloud, and several other Presbyterians also participated in the march, and a few weeks later CORAR announced its endorsement of its own cautious, conservative definition of Black Power.⁶ Wilmore and Benjamin Payton also immediately began working together to produce the most important early black Christian response. Six weeks later, these two directors of the racial justice programs of majority-white church organizations had founded the National Committee of Negro Churchmen (NCNC), soon to become known as the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC).⁷ They also released the new group’s first public statement, which Wilmore said he “helped Ben Payton to write in one night,” as a ringing endorsement of “Black Power,” announced on July 31 via full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*.⁸ Payton and Wilmore had struggled with the question of whether to publish the statement in a black-oriented newspaper instead like the *Harlem Amsterdam News*, but decided against it because they thought “more

black folk would see it in the *New York Times* than in the *Amsterdam News* and would take it more seriously in the former.”⁹

The statement’s forty-eight signatories included leaders in AME, AME Zion, CME, Episcopal, Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, and UCC churches.¹⁰ Among these were Presbyterians Bryant George, Edler G. Hawkins, Reginald Hawkins, LeRoy Patrick, Isaiah P. Pogue, Edgar Ward, and Gayraud Wilmore, and as well as Benjamin Payton and his fellow NCC CORAR official, Dr. Anna Arnold Hedgeman.¹¹ Hedgeman was both the only woman and the only non-clergy signatory.¹² Of the significance of the Black Power Statement, Wilmore later wrote,

Despite its essentially integrationist tone, pointed out by Vincent Harding in a critical appraisal of NCBC documents, it nevertheless represents the beginning of Black reflection on the racial situation in America independent of the White theologians and ethicists whose writings the liberal-neo-orthodox consensus on the race problem presented. It was the banner around which a new organization, the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, was formed with Benjamin F. Payton as its first president - an organization which, while continuing to recognize Martin Luther King, Jr., as the titular leader of the Black revolution, sought to challenge his moderate, assimilationist position and apparent reluctance to concede that power was the name of the game - even among born-again Christians.

Although the primary emphases of Black Theology, as later developed by James H. Cone, were not extrapolated from the Black Power Statement of NCNC, this document was a turning-point in the history of Black Church involvement in the civil rights movement. Stokely Carmichael, the chief spokesman for Black Power, quoted freely from it in speeches across the nation. It was, in fact, the only philosophically cogent defense of Black Power to come out of the rebellions of 1963-1966 and it erected the ideological and the institutional bases upon which Black Theology was to build an alternative to the liberal and neo-orthodox theologies of the American religious establishment.¹³

Wilmore recalled working with Benjamin Payton in “claiming the positive content in the demand for Black Power by clarifying its nonviolent and constructive implications,” creating a “theologically cogent concept of Black Power.”¹⁴ Despite Wilmore’s accurate assertion that

James Cone's theology was "not extrapolated" from the NCBC's Black Power Statement, Cone himself has said that in the late 1960s he "read [early NCBC documents] closely and was inspired by their messages," and he has referred to the NCBC's Black Power Statement as "the beginning of the conscious development of a black theology."¹⁵ Cone also wrote,

More than any other organization, the NCBC was responsible for providing the context for the development of black theology. And more than any other individual, Gayraud S. Wilmore was responsible for providing the theological knowledge and vision upon which black theology was based. . . . Although I wrote the first two books on black theology and have been at the center of many of the debates regarding its meaning, it was Wilmore's theological expertise and imagination that laid the foundation for the early development of black theology. He is the one most responsible for the positive response of the NCBC to my writings and those of Preston Williams, J. Deotis Roberts, and C. Eric Lincoln. He has also been our most creative critic. Without his presence in the NCBC and his constant encouragement and criticism of other perspectives on black theology, the NCBC would soon have disintegrated and black theology would have had no organizational embodiment.¹⁶

Most of the NCBC's members, including more than half of the original signatories of the Black Power Statement, represented majority-white denominations or institutions, with especially high representation by Episcopalians and Presbyterians.¹⁷ According to Metz Rollins, this was not a coincidence.

Long segregated, separated, treated with scorn and disgrace, the black church and the black churchmen of the predominantly white churches are now coming into their own. No longer content to play second-fiddle, to be treated like stepchildren or wayward dependents by the white church and its leadership, the black church has nurtured an acute awareness of its own unique gifts, its own peculiar understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and a new appreciation for its own hallowed and tortured history. . . .¹⁸

Rollins was more than an analyst of this history of second-class status. In fact, he would soon become the inaugural executive director of this new organization. As NCBC director, he had the opportunity to guide the black church in a more militant direction.

In a period of black awareness and black consciousness in the larger black community, black churchmen are insisting that the witness of the black church is meaningful only as it becomes a militant advocate of the cause of justice and dignity for black people.¹⁹

According to James Cone, “with the NCBC definition of black theology as an attack on the white church, the persons best suited for the task were black preachers in white denominations.”²⁰ That may be true, but it was also “black preachers in white denominations” who most felt the need for an organization like the NCBC.²¹ The direction of causation between black clergy in majority-white denominations and the NCBC is complex, but the link between the two is undeniable. Black clergy like Wilmore and Rollins had been nurtured in black church spaces which were a part of majority-white denominations like McDowell Community Presbyterian, Trinity United Presbyterian, Lincoln University, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, and the Council of the North and West. They had made their way into the New York-based denominational and NCC leaderships, often as tokens. They had experienced the paternalistic, patronizing attitudes of their white liberal/moderate colleagues, and had sought to educate their denominations and organizations about racial justice. As Black Power and black consciousness began and the northern urban insurrections took hold, these clergy were radicalized, and came together to organize, systematize, and promote their new agenda of black Christian radicalism.

Although Benjamin Payton soon withdrew from involvement with the NCBC, and in 1967 left the NCC to serve as president of Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, Wilmore said that Payton’s NCC leadership and the NCBC’s first public statement “did more to radicalize the black church than anything I am aware of.”²² At first, those responsible for the Black Power Statement “had no intention of forming a permanent organization.”²³ However, “the controversy and confusion that followed its publication forced black ministers to organize,”

formalizing the new organization at its founding meeting in Dallas in October 1967.²⁴ Metz Rollins, at Wilmore's urging, agreed to serve as the organization's executive director.²⁵ CORAR, which beginning in 1967 became the Council on Church and Race (COCAR), continued to pay Rollins' salary and pension - hence the United Presbyterian Church was funding the executive director of the most prominent Christian Black Power organization.²⁶ The NCBC's primary theologian was also on the UPCUSA payroll, for Wilmore "was the chief writer of most of its statements."²⁷

This new organization created its own theological commission (chaired by Wilmore), held national meetings in Dallas, St. Louis, and Oakland, and changed its name several times.²⁸ The National Committee of Negro Churchmen (NCNC) became the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC), the National Conference of Black Churchmen, and finally the National Conference of Black Christians.²⁹ "Conference" was selected to highlight the group's permanence, "Black" reflected the change in preferred terminology among black Americans in that era, and "Christian" sought to express gender equality in an organization founded by forty-seven men and one woman.³⁰

This organization, headquartered in Harlem, was militant, self-consciously non-southern, and very New York-centric.³¹ Of the forty-eight signatories of the Black Power Statement, thirty-six hailed from north of the Mason-Dixon line, sixteen of those from New York City.³² Wilmore saw the NCBC as a "militant [Northern] counterpart to the [SCLC], "the new caucus of the pastors of several outstanding Black congregations around the country who affirmed black Power and a solidarity that went beyond mere membership in the NCC."³³ Wilmore said,

... we had a strong desire to create a separate national movement in the North that would be more politically radical and theologically liberal than King's [SCLC] in the South. A critically new situation was opened up by Black leadership in many cities north of the Mason-Dixon Line.³⁴

The NCBC quickly became “a battering ram against the gates of white complacency and a major goad for black Christian solidarity in urban America.”³⁵ Wilmore added, “Use of the word “Negro” and the old “bowing and scraping” style of Black interactions with whites inherited from slavery time, seemed to have become despicable and was fading away forever.”³⁶

The NCBC therefore was not only a new religious and political development, but also a cultural development, matching Black Power's emphases on black consciousness, black pride, and self-determination. These cultural elements also drove black Christians who, like Wilmore, participated in majority-white denominations, to identify more closely with the black church. In the late 1960s, the NCBC was a source of unity for black Christians, and it helped to produce, in Wilmore's view, the most sustained black church movement for black consciousness and self-determination since the Garveyism of the Great Migration and the turn-of-the-century AME Church's racial justice activism by leaders like Henry McNeal Turner.³⁷ Under Wilmore's leadership, CORAR also sought “to give more time and attention to closing ranks with the historic black denominations and the pastors of strong black congregations in the urban ghettos of the North and West.”³⁸ The NCBC eventually grew to become the largest ecumenical organization of pro-Black Power black clergy, and spurred African Americans in many denominations to create or re-invigorate their black clergy caucuses. The “largest and most vocal” such caucus was the Black Methodists for Church Renewal (BMCR), organized at a 1968 meeting attended by Stokely Carmichael and C. Eric Lincoln.³⁹ Another such caucus was the

UPCUSA's pre-existing "Concerned Presbyterians," founded by Edler G. Hawkins and Bryant George, which was re-organized by Hawkins, Thelma Adair, and others in 1968 under the new name, "Black Presbyterians United" (BPU).⁴⁰ A brochure justified the need for the new BPU by pointing out the unreliability of white allies, saying,

The walls of segregation seemed as impregnable as ever, and there was little evidence that the church's practice was beginning to correspond with professions. There was much wrong in Zion!⁴¹

BPU's first President, E. Wellington "Tony" Butts, justified the new group in the Black Power language of self-determination.

Black men and women must be enabled to significantly determine their lives and the nature of their communities. They must be free and able to respond to the forces that play upon their life. Black persons must have the opportunity to participate on an equal basis in all aspects of the larger pluralistic society and to work their will in the councils of nations and empires. To this end we seek power and for this purpose we bring this Black caucus into existence.⁴²

The NCBC also would prove essential in generating what would come to be known starting around 1968 as "black theology," a subject which will receive further attention later in this chapter. James H. Cone wrote that "there is not much evidence" that the NCBC had a major influence on the broader Black Power Movement, but he did point out that,

...black power advocates... used black churches for their meetings, invited the radical clergy to participate in the religion workshops of their conferences, and quoted their writings to conservative black Christians and liberal whites. For example, Stokely Carmichael quoted from the 1966 "Black Power Statement" in his speeches; I led the religion workshop at the first major conference of the Congress of African Peoples, the Black Panthers used many churches for their breakfast programs; and James Forman's *Black Manifesto* was strongly supported by the NCBC.⁴³

A “Second Conversion”: Black Consciousness and Black Theology after Newark

A Rebellion and a Black Power Conference in Newark

The transition from his identification with the United Presbyterian Church, its moderate integrationism, and majority-white Euro-American Christianity in general, to a new identification with the black church, Black Power, and black radicalism, became clear at a personal, cultural level for Gayraud Wilmore at the July 20-23, 1967 “National Conference on Black Power” in Newark, New Jersey, an experience he described as “an intensely game-changing spiritual experience,” a “second conversion.”⁴⁴ As with his first conversion in an Italian foxhole, his second conversion also came days after coming under “enemy fire,” during the July 12-17 Newark Rebellion, which, with insurrections in Detroit and other cities that same summer, comprised what Harvard Sitkoff calls “the most intense and destructive wave of racial violence the nation had ever witnessed.”⁴⁵ According to Wilmore,

Bryant George... remembers my calling his office and talking with him in the midst of a fire fight with the police inside a housing project during the Newark riot, with bullets flying around the exposed telephone booth.⁴⁶

Wilmore attended the conference along with with several other NCBC members, including Clarence Cave, who was now a member of the COCAR staff.⁴⁷ NCBC member and Episcopal priest Nathan Wright chaired the conference, which took place “at an Episcopal Church property in downtown Newark,” and Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) was another of its main leaders.⁴⁸

Wright had written “one of the early and widely read texts on black power, *Black Power and Urban Unrest* (1967).”⁴⁹ Other major contributors to the conference included representatives from the NAACP, the Urban League, and Malcolm X’s Organization for Afro-American Unity, Floyd McKissick of CORE, H. Rap Brown of SNCC, Charles 27X Kenyatta of the “Harlem Mau

Maus,” Jesse Jackson, and Maulana “Ron” Karenga.⁵⁰ Wilmore especially recalled the impact of Wright and Karenga on him, personally.⁵¹ Following the Watts Rebellion in 1965, Karenga had founded “Us,” a Los Angeles-based black nationalist community organization which included a paramilitary unit.⁵² He has been a deeply influential figure in black cultural nationalism, especially as the creator, in 1966, of the Kwanzaa holiday.⁵³ Karenga later became a professor and central figure in the development of the field of Africana studies.⁵⁴

Wilmore said of his experience at the conference, “something deep within me changed.”⁵⁵

From the sometimes angry, sometimes benign, but always exciting, eye-opening, and consensual discussions we had at the Newark Airport [Hotel], in the aftermath of the riots, we came away with a radical commitment.... I can’t speak for anyone but myself about the effects of the discussion of Black religion at that Airport conference when the air was still acrid from the ghetto fires in Newark, but I know that it changed some fundamental views a few of us had about the role of the churches in the struggle.⁵⁶

This experience inspired him “to go back to the books on Africa and the fight with colonialism, to the African American rebellions of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner.”⁵⁷ Black Power and black consciousness began to replace “what I had absorbed from political conservatism, middle class complacency, and Calvinistic roots of Reformed Presbyterianism, as practiced by the church that ordained me to preach the gospel!”⁵⁸ In a similar vein, despite the fact that James H. Cone would not enter the NCBC conversation until two years later, Wilmore recalled his realization that,

I was a kid from a fighting congregation in the ghetto of North Philadelphia who believed that Jim Cone had been sent for such a time as this. It seemed to me - and... to a few hardy white staff people who elected to join with us radicalized Black Presbyterians - that it was the *Black Church*, the sleeping giant, the huge, non-theological and poorly organized Black Protestant and Roman Catholic constituents of the inner cities of the U.S. who God chose to bring into the world the long awaited liberationist, “nonsegregated church in a non-segregated society.”⁵⁹

The phrase, “for such a time as this,” was drawn from the Old Testament book of Esther. In that story, a Jew comes into a position of power partly by “passing” as a non-Jew. When she learns of a genocidal plot against her fellow Jews, an associate suggests to her that “perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this,” thereby encouraging her to risk her own life and use all of her political capital to successfully protect her people.⁶⁰ Wilmore had become by this point, along with Edler Hawkins, the most powerful African American in one of the largest, wealthiest, and most powerful majority-white Protestant denominations in the United States. He had done so in part by “playing nice,” by “passing” as an a-political egghead, an easy-going black token in the Division of Social Education and Action (SEA), on the faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, on the drafting committee for the Confession of 1967 (C67), and as CORAR executive director, as the public face of the white church’s effort to “catch up with Dr. King.” Newark in 1967, at a personal level, bookended by support for the Watts Rebellion in 1965 and for James Forman’s Black Manifesto in 1969, marked Wilmore’s “unmasking,” his transformation from leading God’s people as a moderate, reformist, irenic, “pillar of cloud,” to leading them as a radical, unapologetically black, “pillar of fire.” Wilmore left Newark intent on “marshaling and enhancing the power of [the denomination’s] African American constituency to be something more than the poor beggar at the gate,” and seeking to “conduct... the United Presbyterian Church to the far left wing of American Protestantism.”⁶¹ Wilmore now, for the first time, viewed COCAR as responsible and accountable to the black church, rather than to a majority-white mainline denomination. Similarly, Wilmore described the documents produced by the NCBC and others in the late 1960s as having “signaled the end of the subordination of the Black Church to the norms of White Protestantism,” for,

We no longer trusted one another. Black Christians could not trust White church leaders really to understand and appreciate the power nature and radicality of the gospel in the postintegration period. White church leaders could not trust Black Christians to make a theological interpretation of Black pride and power without betraying the transcendence and colorlessness of the gospel.⁶²

Of the attitude of the radical black clergy amid the 1967 formalization of the NCBC, Wilmore recalled,

We were smitten with a sense of *kairos*. We knew that this was a turning point in the quest for black Christian unity, in the evolution of an independent and creative black theology and in the witness of the black church for liberation from oppression and the suffocating embrace of white Christian liberalism. As few as we were, we had the morale of a legion. The atmosphere was full of the electricity of psychic revitalization and commitment. We believed that God had brought us to this hour and that although there was an immensely difficult struggle ahead, we were right and because of the NCBC the black church would never be the same.⁶³

James H. Cone also pointed to the events of mid-1967, including the Newark conference, as a turning point from the early NCBC's "militant integration" to "radical black separatism."⁶⁴ He suggested that the 1966 Black Power Statement still expressed a belief in the power of "moral suasion," noting its affirmation of an "honest kind of integration" rather than a "false kind of 'integration' in which all power was in the hands of whites."⁶⁵ Cone also characterized the group's initial use of the term "Negro" as expressive of its interest in integration.⁶⁶ In explaining this transition in the summer of 1967, culminating in the September 1967 NCC conference which he termed as "the decisive turning point in the movement to separatism," Cone wrote,

Because black preachers' churches were in the ghettos, they could not avoid the real issues that ignited the riots. Therefore when white preachers of suburbia began to theologize about violence and nonviolence, condemning the rioters and advocating a return to "law and order," black clergy radicals moved rapidly from Martin King's theology of integration to Malcolm X's philosophy of black separatism.⁶⁷

However, Cone, similarly to Wilmore, identified the July 1967 Newark and Detroit rebellions as the decisive moment for him at a personal level, shifting from an identification with the general stance of Martin Luther King, Jr. to that of Malcolm X.

I remember clearly when Malcolm and black power made a decisive and permanent imprint upon my theological consciousness. I was teaching at Adrian College... in Adrian, Michigan, trying to make sense out of my vocation as a theologian. The black rage that ignited the Newark and Detroit riots in July 1967, killing nearly eighty people, revolutionized my theological consciousness. Nothing in seminary prepared me for this historic moment. It forced me to confront the blackness of my identity and to make theological sense of it.⁶⁸

While Cone claimed that the change in the NCBC's name from "Negro" to "Black" was part of this transition in the movement, he also pointed out that at the organization's formalization and first annual meeting in Dallas in October 1967 it maintained the title of "National Committee of Negro Churchmen," waiting until early 1968 to change its name to the "National Committee of Black Churchmen."⁶⁹ As previously noted, this was the same year in which the United Presbyterian black caucus also added "Black" to its name, changing from "Concerned Presbyterians" to "Black Presbyterians United." Cone added that the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. in April 1968 was another key event in the "complete turn toward militant black separatism," noting that "after King's death members of the white clergy never knew what to expect from members of the black clergy, because the latter had now become emotionally charged with a mission to 'blackenize' the gospel for the purpose of liberating their people."⁷⁰

The Church and the the Urban Crisis

In September 1967, the National Council of Churches held a conference in Washington, D.C. on "The Church and the Urban Crisis" - the event which James Cone called "the decisive

turning point in the movement toward black separatism.”⁷¹ During this time, even while maintaining his other responsibilities as executive director of COCAR and chair of the NCBC’s theological commission, Wilmore was also temporarily serving in a leadership role with the NCC, as acting director of its Department of Social Justice.⁷² Other leaders involved in the conference included Nathan Wright, Andrew Young, Calvin Marshall, Robert Hoppe, and John McDowell.⁷³ According to Cone,

The younger black members of the NCBC were so angry and frustrated with white NCC members that they insisted that the conference divide itself into black and white caucuses, with each making its own separate statement regarding the urban crisis. White church persons did not wish to separate into caucuses, because black separatism was seen as a complete denial of Jesus’ gospel of reconciliation. But the members of the radical black clergy were adamant in their determination to write a separate statement that would reflect their discovery of the religious meaning of black power. Whites were trying to apply outmoded neoorthodox and liberal theological ideas to a completely new political situation, but blacks were searching for a new theological basis for separating from middle-class whites and affirming unqualified solidarity with the black poor.⁷⁴

According to Gayraud Wilmore, a great deal of the “early activity” and development of the early ideas of the NCBC occurred “in the committee rooms and conferences halls of the [NCC],” “in confrontation with White churchmen at those meetings,” as in the case of this conference.⁷⁵ Of the conference, Wilmore said,

Its historic significance is that it was promulgated at the time of the first open split between Black and White church leaders within a national interdenominational agency.... When, on September 27, 1967, [this conference] exploded into two caucuses, one Black and one White, it was apparent that the differences were acute and a new era of polarization had begun.”⁷⁶

In terms of the cause of this split, Wilmore wrote,

Actually the decision was forced by the younger Black clergy present [especially NCBC members] who were angry and frustrated by the compromises necessary for ecumenism and interracial amity during one of the most riot-torn years in the nation’s history.... Tensions were running high. Some of the Black leaders felt that only disengagement in

separate rooms would vindicate their commitment to Black Power and force the White delegates to make up their minds about the legitimacy of such a stance within American Christianity.⁷⁷

Changes in the Commission: Action, Militancy, and the North

As the NCBC and other Black Power advocates emphasized the northern urban context, and as Wilmore and others came to feel themselves more accountable to the black church and black people rather than to the denomination, “Presbyterianism,” or the Reformed tradition, CORAR’s organizational focus followed suit. Urban rebellions like those in Watts, Newark, and Detroit continued through 1968, and Wilmore and his Commission stayed involved with them. In 1967 CORAR was renamed the Council on Church and Race (COCAR), and the denomination transferred the Commission’s oversight from the Board of Christian Education (BCE) to the Board of National Missions (BNM).⁷⁸ It had become clear that the Commission was more focused on action than on education, with an increasing focus on urban issues, in which the BNM also specialized.⁷⁹ The Commission could now more easily “call upon and use folks more naturally informed and involved in day-to-day race relations and community organizing activity.”⁸⁰ For a variety of reasons, the Commission also transferred responsibility for its Hattiesburg-based voter registration efforts to the NCC in 1965 - yet another piece of the Commission’s northward turn.⁸¹ Wilmore explained that as COCAR,

... we became less of a Hattiesburg, Mississippi voter registration project, trying to incite ministers to come down there, and more of a Northern operation with access to a sizable number of men and women already in the field as representatives of the National Mission Board rather than the few reporting to the [BCE].⁸²

Some of the Commission's critics hoped BNM oversight would help "rein in" a somewhat unruly Commission, but they were disappointed, as the new COCAR proved to be more militant than its predecessor, aided by the zealous support of its mission by BNM General Secretary Kenneth G. Neigh, and by the replacement of Marshal L. Scott with Edler Hawkins as the Commission's new chair.⁸³ At the time of the 1967 re-organization of COCAR, Neigh said,

In many circles these days there is retrenchment or outright falling away in racial concerns. Let me make it very clear, therefore, that the reorganization of the United Presbyterian Church's work in racial matters is the opposite of that unfortunate trend. The new arrangement has been completed in order to strengthen and broaden the Church's efforts.... It [COCAR] continues... as a national program - with both the freedom and the responsibility to speak to the Church and the nation in matters of race. The Council and its representatives will continue to make public statements on critical issues, and to map out appropriate programs and projects.⁸⁴

Following the reorganization of COCAR, Gayraud Wilmore, newly empowered and radicalized, now fully realized his opportunity and responsibility to use this power on behalf of black people, without any deference to white people.

I became... a Black American who had reached the top of the ladder in a white church, but was deeply interested in resurrecting the spirit of radical leaders like the Prosser brothers, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner in the Black Presbyterian Church with or without white acquiescence.⁸⁵

The new COCAR immersed itself in a northern, urban, militant environment. Wilmore recalled that environment, including, as previously mentioned, his lack of surprise by the urban rebellions of that era.

... they didn't really come as a surprise to me, I felt the tension mounting, year after year after 1963, '64, '65, '66, one could feel the tension mounting, the summers were periods of great tension and desperation on the part of black people living in the ghetto. It was hot. When they talk about a "long hot summer," I think they're talking about climate as well as the tempers, and it was inevitable that it should explode. Plus the fact that there were a number of radical organizations that were moving in the black community at that time, RAM, the Revolutionary Action Movement, the Republic of New Africa, US from

California under Ron Karenga, Muslims of course were going strong, so there were various radical, sectarian, and cultic movements going around in the ghetto that kept the pot boiling so to speak, and were ripe for, made things ripe for that kind of revolutionary action.⁸⁶

Wilmore noted the Commission's role in that environment.

...I think the Presbyterian church played a fairly important role in some of the city riots in the sense that we were on the scene, and helped in Detroit and at Watts, and in Newark, to develop the food distribution centers, mobilize some of our clergy and got them tied in to the local clergy who were trying to do something about the food distribution question more than anything else, that was really a critical matter.⁸⁷

As previously noted, Wilmore "roamed the cities where rioting and civil unrest occurred..., counseling our presbytery staffs and deploying our resources to meet emergencies, most notably in Rochester, Los Angeles, Newark, Detroit, and Washington, D.C."⁸⁸ Wilmore and Metz Rollins, who by this time was the executive director of the NCBC yet remained on COCAR's payroll, "became deeply embedded in the new movement of black pastors, church executives, street people, and scholars" that made up the Black Power movement.⁸⁹ Wilmore and Rollins "openly... represented the overwhelmingly white UPCUSA in circles where it had not been and would not have been welcome in those days."⁹⁰ These two COCAR leaders were therefore ready to play a crucial mediating, interpretive, bridge-building role between black radicals and white Christians amid the Black Manifesto crisis of 1969 (see chapter 5). Wilmore and Rollins also "believed it was critically important for our church to undergird the NCBC as a new strategic initiative," promoting "Black Power as a legitimate, theologically sound, and sociologically constructive force," a force leading to would become known as "Black Theology."⁹¹

Black Theology, the Black Church, and the Reformed Tradition

“A Kind of ‘Black Theology’ Aborning”

The origins of the specific term “black theology” are unclear, but it seems to have arisen from NCBC discourse sometime during the 1968 year.⁹² It appeared in a November 1968 *Time* magazine article and in a February 1969 *Christian Century* article describing the NCBC’s second convocation, held in St. Louis in October 1968.⁹³ A report by Gayraud Wilmore for the NCBC’s theological commission in the fall of 1968 also used the term twice.⁹⁴ In discussing a 1968 project by the NCBC’s theological commission in which black scholars responded to articles presenting some NCBC concerns, Wilmore wrote,

The purpose of this project was to make available to NCNC at its St. Louis meeting the considered judgments, of some of the most competent of black church scholarship on a few key questions in the current discussion about a “black theology.”⁹⁵

In his effort to draw conclusions based on the entirety of the project in terms of “unities or patterns here which may suggest currents of black scholarship and therefore guidance to the theological development of the NCNC...,” Wilmore made his second reference to Black Theology:

One thing, however, seems clear. It is the lively interest and enthusiasm black academicians and pastors have for breaking into what has obviously been a quiescent, almost sterile theological orthodoxy among black churches of all denominations. There is, unquestionably, great interest in opening up new material for theological study and reconstruction among black churchmen. There is a sneaking suspicion among those who participated in the project that something is stirring in parts of the black church; that there is a kind of “black theology” aborning, equal to the budding renaissance in arts and letters which is heralded today in Harlem and other black communities across the nation. All of the respondents in this survey welcomed this new quest for the theological basis of black church renewal in the context of the movement for racial justice.⁹⁶

While in this essay Wilmore was reflecting on and quoting from the responses of these scholars, he did not quote anyone else as using the term, “black theology.” He himself only used it twice, both times in quotes, and both times giving the term the sense of a new idea.⁹⁷ Perhaps he was even consciously proposing this new term in order to encapsulate this new idea. While neither Gayraud Wilmore nor James Cone later claimed that the former was the inventor of the term, and both suggested that it was the sort of thing that emerged out of a great deal of group conversations, this article, depending on its precise date, is either the earliest extant use of the term in print, or the earliest such use of the term by one of its proponents. Gayraud Wilmore, therefore, is the most likely candidate to have coined the term, “black theology.”

James H. Cone, of course, made the term famous through his first book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, published in April 1969, which was “the first publication to use the term... in an attempt to develop a constructive theology.”⁹⁸ Cone’s prominence as one of its early proponents has at times seemed to render Black Theology, at least in its late 1960s-early 1970s phase, synonymous with the specific theology of Cone himself. According to Wilmore, “more than anyone else James H. Cone set the tone and described the content for Black Theology” with his first book.⁹⁹ Wilmore recalled his first encounter with this book, and, apparently, with Cone himself:

When *Black Theology and Black Power* appeared in 1969 very few of the leaders of the NCBC, outside of the African Methodists, had heard of James Cone, a recent Ph.D. from Northwestern University and assistant professor of religion at Adrian College in Michigan. “What,” I asked incredulously, “is a Black theologian doing at a little White college in the boondocks of Michigan!”¹⁰⁰

By that point, Wilmore had been at the center of the NCBC and head of its theological commission for nearly three years, working, essentially, on the project of developing what would

become known as Black Theology - yet here was a monograph on the subject by a junior scholar Wilmore had never heard of before.

I remember someone giving me a review of the book from the *Detroit Free Press* in an unguarded moment. I whooped for joy. Here was a mature and scholarly presentation, albeit ebullient with youth, of what we could not find words to say from the first day that Benjamin Payton and I sat down in his office to compose the draft of the Black Power statement. Who was this young professor who articulated the faith of the new breed of Black churchmen as if he had been present at every interminable committee meeting and midnight bull session that had taken place among the members of the NCBC from its inception? It was for me a moment of spiritual exultation and I went out to find the book, which I read through in one sitting.¹⁰¹

Wilmore and Payton had been working together to develop Black Theology since 1966, but the forty-seven-year-old Wilmore had also been struggling since his Lincoln days to make sense of the blend of blackness, justice, and Christianity into which he had been born, baptized, and educated. The thought of George Kelsey had resonated deeply with him, as had the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. But none of them had spoken to Wilmore - a child of McDowell Presbyterian Church amid the Philadelphia slums - as had this thirty-year-old Methodist from Arkansas. James Cone's anonymity in the world of the radical black clergy of the NCBC would quickly disappear:

Cone became, almost immediately, the "resident theologian" of the National Conference, whether he realized it or not. I remember how we excused him from the in-fighting and strategy meetings at the Interchurch Center and at the NCBC headquarters... because he had more important work to do thinking through the theological meaning of what we were about... no one had severed the Gordian knot which tied us to the old theology more cleanly than he. Some recoiled at the vehemence with which he attacked White Christians, but many of us realized that this was precisely what we needed at the moment, for we had burned our theological bridges behind us and had nowhere to go except all the way home. This meant in the direction of the latent radicalism that had been harbored within the soul of Black Christianity since George Liele and David George cut their moorings in the late eighteenth century and set their faces like flint for Jamaica and Sierra Leone.¹⁰²

In June 1969, NCBC members gathered in Atlanta, where they welcomed their new “resident theologian” with open arms. This meeting of the organization’s theological commission, held at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC), a consortium of black seminaries affiliated with several denominations, yielded the “Black Theology Statement.”¹⁰³ According to Gayraud Wilmore, this statement “bears the unmistakable stamp of [James Cone’s] perspective and style,” for “he was, of course, the key member of the NCBC Theological Commission which drafted it” - just two months after being “discovered” through his first book.¹⁰⁴ According to Cone, between the April 1969 publication of his first book and that June 1969 conference, “the term, ‘black theology’ became commonplace among most members of the radical black clergy and theologians.”¹⁰⁵

Black Theology, Black Power, and the Black Church

Black Theology, at least the form of it which came into being in the late 1960s (as opposed to using that term to describe some or all theological activity by black Americans over the past 400 years), was a product of the black church and black Christian academics, but it also would not have come into being as such without influences from outside the church. The clearest example of this is the fact that it was the inauguration of the Black Power movement by Stokely Carmichael and others in June 1966 which led directly to the creation of the NCBC, from which Black Theology arose over the course of the subsequent three years. In general, the writings of Gayraud Wilmore, James Cone, Albert B. Cleage, Jr., Nathan Wright, and the NCBC were responding to the pressure brought upon black Christianity by young black militants - the heirs of Malcolm X. Of this phenomenon, Wilmore wrote,

It should not be doubted that the dynamic for this turn of events within American Christianity came from outside rather than inside the churches. It was the black folk of Watts, Newark, Detroit, and hundreds of other communities across the nation, and the young men and women of the SNCC [sic] and northern-based nationalist groups, who convinced black ministers that the church was expendable if it proved to be unwilling to immerse itself in the vortex of the black power movement. It was not difficult to show that the movement was catching on everywhere and that its basic motif was pregnant with moral and religious meaning. Black believers could not evade its magnetic force once the people of the streets took the cause into their own hands.¹⁰⁶

Radical black clergy, despite their own militant aura, were writing and speaking from a position of weakness, not one of strength. They were trying to hold together a black church that was struggling to stay relevant and appealing to black youth, as those youth felt drawn away from the church toward Black Power and black nationalism. This was true at least at the level of theological ideas, even though the maintenance of particular church institutions was not always the main concern of such thinkers. These theologians “refused to accept the assumption of some Black academics, secularists, and Black Muslims that ‘Christianity is the white man’s religion’ and that the white church could only sell black people down the river.”¹⁰⁷ They also refused to accept the assumption of some moderate church people that radicalism and Black Power were outside or even opposed to the mission of the church. They sought to reveal or create a fusion between Black Power and the black church, so that the latter might be enabled to speak more directly and prophetically against the deeply rooted, institutionalized American white supremacy which was responsible for the conditions behind the rebellions in Watts, Newark, and Detroit.

Gayraud Wilmore in particular sought to hold together black radicalism and Christianity, arguing that the very roots of the black church were essentially radical, an argument which would form the heart of his 1972 book, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.¹⁰⁸ However, the Black Theology and black religious history championed by Wilmore, Cone, and others was

sometimes more normative or prescriptive than descriptive, championing the aspects of black history and Christian theology which best connected with Black Power and black nationalism. The lived religion of the people in the pews, or those who had left the pews for the streets, was a different story. In theorizing “Black Theology” they did not set out to catalogue the tremendous diversities of black religion or black Christianity, in the United States or otherwise - including, for example, those forms of black religion examined by Judith Weisenfeld in *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (2017).¹⁰⁹ Rather, they selected a particular strain of radical, political, black religion - very Christian, Protestant, and male - and advocated for it as *the* theological and historical center of black religion.

Of the pressure arising from young, militant African Americans who were skeptical of Christian ideas and institutions, Wilmore wrote,

... the fact that [the NCBC] was formed in the hurricane eye of a black revolution unprecedented in American history and at a time when the credibility of the Christian faith was being severely tested in the black ghettos of the nation, created an even more intense climate of inquiry and concern about theological and ideological foundations than may have been generated in calmer days when clergymen came together to form ministerial alliances for mutual edification and the propagation of the Gospel. The result has been... a rising crescendo of voices from both the pulpit and pew demanding that black churchmen reexamine their beliefs; that unless they begin to speak and act relevantly in the present crisis they must prepare to die; that unless they “do their thing” in some kind of symbolic and actual disengagement from the opprobrium of a white racist Christianity, they have no right to exist in the black community.¹¹⁰

The “crisis in the nation,” as some called the conditions of poverty and racism which had given rise to the urban insurrections, had become a crisis in the black church. Did the church have anything “relevant” to say about the conditions around it - or about American white supremacy in general?

A call to “come let us reason together” has gone out from a restive black church leadership and it is reechoed again and again wherever clergy and laity congregate across denominational lines. An evocative theological dialogue is now in process and it is clear that its object is not esoteric quibble about irrelevant pieties, but a sober reassessment of the ground upon which we stand - the search from a firmer footing, a “faith-lock,” from which black Christians can carry on a life and death struggle against the principalities and powers, the rulers of this present darkness in America.¹¹¹

James Cone also highlighted some of the tensions between the NCBC and other black church leaders, and the NCBC’s criticisms of those aspects of the black church so deplored by young militants, noting the NCBC as a rare instance in which “the black church created the context for prophetic criticism to arise from *within*.”¹¹² He said that “never before had its ministers been as forceful and frank about the failure of their institution to serve as a liberating force in the black community.”¹¹³ This “frankness” by NCBC members about the black church’s “failure” created “a sharp break between [the NCBC] and conservative black church leaders,” due to the former’s sense of “being gripped by God’s liberating Spirit and being called to follow Jesus the liberator into the ghettos in order to liberate black humanity from unbearable suffering.”¹¹⁴ Of the excitement and challenges of this revolutionary moment, Wilmore recalled,

Something new was happening in black Christianity between 1966 and 1969 and we knew it. Although among our members were some of the most powerful church leaders in America we knew that we were but a tiny minority of black church people with almost no support from the inner circles of the great black denominations. Even Dr. King studiously avoided us - deploring our close collaboration with the young militants of black power.¹¹⁵

Black Theology and the Reformed Tradition

Gayraud Wilmore, James Cone, and NCBC unwaveringly sought to craft a new theology based in the heritage of black people. After the Newark conference at which Wilmore experienced his second conversion - implying that he was converting *from* something - he said

that Black Power and black consciousness began to replace “what I had absorbed from political conservatism, middle-class complacency, and Calvinistic roots of Reformed Presbyterianism, as practiced by the church that ordained me to preach the gospel!”¹¹⁶ Wilmore had also realized that,

...it was the *Black Church*, the sleeping giant, the huge, non-theological and poorly organized Black Protestant and Roman Catholic constituents of the inner cities of the U.S. who[m] God chose to bring into the world the long awaited liberationist, “nonsegregated church in a non-segregated society.”¹¹⁷

Recall also Wilmore’s criticisms of that fact that the overriding concerns of other members of the drafting committee for the Confession of 1967 (C67) were those of a kind of academic, colorblind Reformed theology. Simply in terms of Wilmore’s time commitments, around 1963-64 he had ceased participating in the drafting of C67, and by 1966 he was perhaps the central figure in the drafting of the NCBC statements which would perhaps comprise its own “Book of Confessions.” However, the radical black clergy were not always successful in jettisoning the influences of the white, Euro-American theologies which had comprised so much of their academic training, as is evident in criticisms of the integrationism of the early NCBC documents. Of course, many of these clergy were in majority-white denominations, so perhaps it is unsurprising that even as they used white-dominated institutions to promote Black Power and Black Theology, they also used white-dominated theological traditions to do the same. In Gayraud Wilmore’s case, his thought has always reflected the deep, formational influence of the Reformed tradition. After all, he did eventually write the book, *Black and Presbyterian*. This Reformed influence was evident even at the height of Wilmore’s ostensible rejection of this tradition, in the 1967-68 period. It may even be appropriate to understand the NCBC not as a

rejection of the Reformed tradition, but as a direct response to or even a development within that tradition. In other words, the NCBC's statements may in fact have comprised the radical black clergy's own "Confession of 1967" and "Book of Confessions." In fact, the link between the two is quite direct and perhaps even causal.

Wilmore, of course, is the personal link between the two. The token black member of the C67 drafting committee and top Presbyterian racial justice official was also co-founder of the NCBC, head of its theological commission, and, according to James Cone, wrote most of its official documents. While Wilmore's influence on the final version of C67 was limited, his experiences on its drafting committee, positive and negative, strongly influenced his contributions to NCBC documents. The most intriguing evidence to this effect is Wilmore's reference to the "Theological Declaration of Barmen" in his 1968 NCBC report, "The Theological Commission Project." The Barmen Declaration was a 1934 statement, largely composed by Karl Barth, which was affirmed by Reformed churches in Germany in opposition to the Nazi regime.¹¹⁸ This Declaration was one of the eight creeds and confessions which formed, beginning in 1967, the UPCUSA's new *Book of Confessions*. Barmen and C67 itself were the only post-seventeenth century documents included in this *Book of Confessions*. In fact, one cannot tell the whole story of the C67 drafting committee's attitude toward racial justice without considering its decision to include the Barmen Declaration, which was perhaps the more radical of these two twentieth century statements.

This Declaration constituted a direct, political challenge to a racist, fascist regime, at great personal risk (and, for many, cost) to its signers, indicating their recognition that current political and social conditions constituted a crisis of the highest magnitude.¹¹⁹ Barmen arose out

of a situation known as a *status confessionis*, a term in Reformed theology which refers to “a dire situation in which enough is enough - in which a confession of faith has become unavoidable.”¹²⁰

The Reformed theory behind confessions holds that the church should create such statements only when absolutely necessary because of an essential concern about theology or human sin. In other words, only in the most serious of crises, especially crises with theological ramifications, should the church draw a line in the sand by producing such a document. C67 was a different kind of confession, one responding to less immediate issues around biblical and confessional interpretation. The C67 drafting committee did not feel that it was responding to a theological or social crisis, certainly not one comparable to that of 1930s Germany. Its members also did not face comparable risks or costs to those experienced by signers of the Barmen Declaration.

However, the drafting committee was willing to acknowledge that political and racial conditions could become serious enough that the church would be forced to risk its own life by speaking out.

In this NCBC Theological Commission report - the same one which included the earliest extant use of the term “black theology” - Wilmore wrote,

The Report of the Theological Commission in Dallas [1967] was drafted by a small group charged with bringing before the membership the main lines of theological inquiry which might, at some future time, provide the basis for theological consultations.... Further, it was assumed in Dallas that some kind of “Barmen Declaration” of black churchmen, in the face of the repressive and genocidal racism of American society, might be promulgated by NCNC, with the Theological Commission providing the study basis upon which such an historic declaration might be constructed.¹²¹

Wilmore disagreed with the rest of the C67 drafting committee. Well versed in this Reformed concept, he *did believe* that the 1960s American church was experiencing a *status confessionis* comparable to that of 1930s Germany. In such a situation, the church’s response was absolutely

necessary. Later in this document, Wilmore wrote of the project to bring together black scholars to discuss “a few key questions in the current discussion about a ‘black theology,’” that,

It was assumed that if it were possible to get an analysis of some significant theological material from a few established persons in the field, we would be able to surmise with some accuracy how close black scholars were to a consensus on several important matters, ... what might be the ingredients of a basic NCNC theological position paper, an embryonic confessional statement or a contemporary pronouncement akin to the Barmen Declaration, the famous Columbus Statement of the Federal Council of Churches in 1936 or *Mater et Magistra* of Pope John XXIII.¹²²

While all of the NCBC documents dealt with these kinds of concerns, the June 1969 “Black Theology Statement” was essentially the NCBC’s formal answer, its “embryonic confessional statement,” in this regard.

As a member of the C67 drafting committee, Wilmore would have been intimately familiar with the Barmen Declaration, and this document might have been of particular interest to Wilmore given its explicit opposition to white supremacy. Also, one of the distinctive emphases of C67 and the *Book of Confessions* was the importance of context. Instead of revising the Westminster Confession of Faith or replacing it entirely, the denomination had chosen to shift from following Westminster as its only confession, to relying on eight statements with more attention to the widely varying contexts in which those statements were written. It followed, therefore, that any situation of church crisis might merit a new such statement. Wilmore, of course, felt that C67 was not an adequate response to the racial justice crisis of the 1960s, and that a different confessional response was needed. When the almost entirely white male Dowey committee failed to produce an adequate confessional response to this *status confessionis*, Wilmore then started his own organization and chaired that organization’s committee tasked with producing a new confessional statement around the developing notion of “black theology.”

Indeed, this earliest-known written use of the term “black theology,” in Wilmore’s “Theological Commission Project” report, appeared just one page after this document’s first reference to the Barmen Declaration, and two sentences before its second, as “an embryonic confessional statement or a contemporary pronouncement akin to the Barmen Declaration.” While “black theology” is a broad category which cannot be limited to the thought of Wilmore, Cone, the NCBC, or the 1960s era, this connection between it and the Barmen Declaration makes a strong case for a direct causal link between C67 and the NCBC, between an almost all-white committee dominated by Princeton academics and an all-black committee of pro-black power clergy, between the Reformed tradition and Black Theology.

At the 1982 symposium on C67, Wilmore had said that “the term reconciliation itself was suspect in the black community at the time that this confession was being drafted,” and that the term,

...seemed to many black folks to imply conciliation and pacification, the compromise of just demands in order to avoid conflict, to soften antagonism, and make what many people considered to be a premature peace with the oppressor.¹²³

In this same symposium, Wilmore also highlighted, as an example of black wariness about “reconciliation” at the time, the NCBC’s July 1966 Black Power Statement, which used the term in the context of reconciliation “to ourselves as persons and to ourselves as an historical group,” leading to “a new self-image in which we can feel a normal sense of pride in self.”¹²⁴ In making this reference, Wilmore did reveal that black Christian leaders were employing that term quite differently in 1966 than were the drafters of C67. However, Wilmore also underscored the fact that even as of 1966, the NCBC was still using the term, “reconciliation,” however re-imagined. Elsewhere in the Black Power Statement, the writers used the term in the sense of reconciliation

not just with oneself, but “with the white majority” and “with our white brothers,” albeit taking great care to make clear the impossibility of such reconciliation in the absence of justice.¹²⁵

Another curious aspect of Wilmore’s reference to the Black Power Statement here was the fact that while the statement was meant to be a group statement, and it did have dozens of signers, Gayraud Wilmore and Benjamin Payton actually wrote its content. Therefore, in 1966, in the waning months of the nearly decade-long process of crafting and formalizing C67, as Wilmore technically remained on the drafting committee despite having ceased to participate in it, he himself used its key term in the founding document of the organization out of which Black Theology would emerge. Indeed, the Black Power Statement was both the first public statement of the NCBC, and the first document included in Gayraud Wilmore and James Cone’s *Black Theology: A Documentary History*. Perhaps this is further evidence that Wilmore’s participation in and reaction against the C67 process and product led directly to his contributions to the confessional drafting committee out of which Black Theology emerged.

James Cone has criticized the ways in which the NCBC and early Black Theology were “shaped almost entirely by its reaction to white racism in the churches and in society,” constituting “a negative reaction to whites rather than... a positive reaction to the history and culture of blacks.”¹²⁶ In fact, he has pointed to Wilmore as one “who accented the need to base black theology upon a foundation that was more than just a reaction to something else,” through a “turn to black and African history in search of our theological roots so that black theology could become something more than the mere ‘blackening’ of white Western Christianity.”¹²⁷ While some of those concerns do apply to a link between the Reformed tradition and Black Theology, it would be inaccurate to characterize this particular link entirely in such a manner.

The Reformed tradition, although based in Europe, should not be reduced to its origins. By the 1960s, the Reformed tradition in the United States included major contributions from the African Americans of the Council of the North and West, and of the UPCUSA's majority-black southern presbyteries and synods. The UPCUSA's engagements with racial justice issues are often seen as the product of white liberalism and moderation, especially given the large presence of white liberals and moderates in denominational leadership. However, many such engagements would not have occurred without the pressure brought upon the denomination by the proto-Black Power church-within-a-church of black Presbyterianism. While the Dowey committee's inclusion of only one person of color and one woman were symptomatic of the denomination's racism and sexism at the time, it is also notable that the committee included any such persons at all. Without black Presbyterianism and the Council of the North and West, the committee might have been all-white and made no mention of racism whatsoever in C67, and therefore might not have played any role in inspiring NCBC documents.

Wilmore was involved a strange confluence of events in terms of racial justice and Presbyterianism in the year 1967. At the that year's UPCUSA General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, the denomination reorganized its race commission as COCAR, giving it even more of an activist profile. At that same Assembly, under pressure from black Presbyterians, the denomination provided an endorsement of Black Power which was "more radical than anything that had been promulgated by the NAACP, SCLC, or any black denomination," stating,

Whereas, we cannot escape either the reality of the dominance of oppressive white power or that the cry of black power is a legitimate cry from a powerless people rising out of a sense of futility, frustration, and bitter experience; and Whereas, Christians of all races have failed to understand their brothers in Christ; Be it therefore resolved that the 179th General Assembly (1967): 1. Encourages United Presbyterians to view the phenomenon

of black power within the context of the white power we exercise, seeing in it both the legacy of a frustrated aspiration and the promise of a newly assertive self-identity.¹²⁸

Also at that same Assembly, the denomination gave its final assent to C67 and to the *Book of Confessions*, with their emphasis on the value of context, their recognition of the importance of racial justice (through C67's anti-racist paragraph and through the anti-Nazi Barmen Declaration), and their use of the language of "reconciliation." To the black clergy who would form the NCBC, this "reconciliation" language might have seemed quite progressive in the early 1960s, and perhaps still useful albeit with qualifiers in 1966, but by 1967 seemed almost reactionary.

The UPCUSA's Assembly took place in May 1967. In Newark that July, between the rebellions in that city and in Detroit, Wilmore experience his "second conversion" to a theology of Black Power and black consciousness. In September, Wilmore served as acting director of the NCC's Department of Social Justice during the NCC's conference on the Church and the Urban Crisis, which James Cone called the turning point for the NCBC's movement into a more radical separatism. In October, the NCBC was officially organized in Dallas, with Wilmore as chair of its theological commission, as he urged the NCBC to produce its own Barmen-like statement in the face of the *status confessionis* constituted by the genocidal oppression of black Americans. In his leadership roles with COCAR, the C67 drafting committee, the NCC, and the NCBC, Wilmore was at the center of each of these events.

“The White Problem”: Responding to White Backlash

Defending Adam Clayton Powell

As in his 1965 Montreat speech in defense of the Watts rebels, Wilmore continued to find himself acting as a translator, interpreter, and defender of Black Power and black radicalism to white Christians, including in his contributions to NCBC statements. For example, the 1966 Black Power Statement said,

We deplore the overt violence of riots, but we believe it is more important to focus on the real sources of the eruptions. These sources may be abetted inside the ghetto, but their basic causes lie in the silent and covert violence which white middle-class America inflicts upon the victims of the inner city. The hidden, smooth and often smiling decisions of American leaders which tie a white noose of suburbia around their necks, and which pin the backs of the masses of Negroes against the steaming ghetto walls... in short: the failure of American leaders to use American power to create equal opportunity *in life* as well as *in law* - this is the real problem and not the anguished cry for “black power.”¹²⁹

Similarly, in lobbying for passage of Civil Rights legislation in August 1967, Wilmore, representing the NCC, along with leaders from the United States Catholic Conference and the Synagogue Council of America, presented a joint statement to a Senate judiciary subcommittee, arguing that the urban rebellions should not prevent such legislation’s passage.¹³⁰ These leaders argued that the Civil and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965 had been “a positive factor... in defusing violence and civil disorder.”¹³¹ They added that “the existence of problems and disorder in our cities is not a testament to the failure of that legislation, but only to the fact that we have not yet gone far enough in insuring [sic] equality of opportunity for all of our people.”¹³²

Such translation work often served as a response to - or in anticipation of - white and/or right-wing backlash to black radicalism. Such backlash became a powerful force in the late 1960s. On November 3, 1966, the NCBC released its second official statement, also published in

the *New York Times*, “after a solemn processional, in full vestments, to the Statue of Liberty,” shortly after the statue’s eightieth anniversary.¹³³ This statement, “Racism and the Elections: The American Dilemma, 1966,” expressed concern about a “white backlash” coming in the national mid-term elections scheduled for November 8.¹³⁴ The statement said, “America cannot be America by electing ‘white backlash’ candidates in the November elections,” and,

Therefore, we will not be intimidated by the so-called “white backlash,” for white America has been “backlashing” on the fundamental human and constitutional rights of Negro Americans since the 18th century. The election of racists in November will merely be a continuation of this pattern.”¹³⁵

According to Wilmore, this statement’s “purpose was to speak to the issue of racism and power on the eve of a congressional election threatened by White-backlash candidates seeking to exploit the civil disorders in Chicago, Cleveland, and other Northern cities that year.”¹³⁶

When the U.S. Congress refused to seat embattled Congressman Adam Clayton Powell in January 1967, while some Civil Rights leaders like Roy Wilkins of the NAACP publicly and harshly condemned Powell, Wilmore aligned with others, like Floyd McKissick of CORE, and, according to the *New York Times*, “came to Mr. Powell’s support... with a bitter attack on Congress.”¹³⁷ The NCBC also came to Powell’s defense in the form of its third official statement, “The Powell Affair - A Crisis of Morals and Faith.”¹³⁸ In a February 1967 editorial, the *New York Times* criticized black leaders for their support of Black Power and of Powell, accused such leaders of a new “element of insincerity,” and warned them that “in a predominantly white society they cannot move ahead without allies and support from the larger community.”¹³⁹ In response to this editorial, Gayraud Wilmore wrote a letter to the editor, angrily assailing the *Times* as “reflect[ing] the view-point of middle-of-the-road white liberals.”¹⁴⁰ He also said that,

...what white liberals take for insincerity is plain mistrust. We just don't believe that many people are able to transcend the superior, patronizing attitude that rich white folks have always had for poor black folks. And we are as sincere about that as can be!¹⁴¹

Wilmore lamented

...the seeming impossibility of making white liberals understand these days that the quest for Black Power and the Negro support of Adam Powell have authentic and legitimate motivation. They spring from a new sophistication about power as an instrument of social progress in the United States.... Negroes no longer trust the ethical sensitivities of the white middle class.¹⁴²

He claimed that any white goodwill "is conditioned upon the voluntary emasculation of Negro leadership," and called the *Times*' assertion about the black need for white allies "a threat," saying, "If the price of white cooperation is being 'good Negroes' and permitting white power to dole out freedom bit by bit, we would rather go it alone."¹⁴³ Wilmore warned that black leaders would continue in this "disruptingly militant" vein, "to salvage a modicum of pride and give discomfort to the enemy."¹⁴⁴

"The White Problem"

However, despite his scorn for white liberals his ostensible preference for "going it alone," Gayraud Wilmore cared deeply about white viewpoints, and he knew the *New York Times* was right at some level about the necessity of white support for Black Power.¹⁴⁵ Wilmore frequently received letters from white Presbyterians who were critical of his and the Commission's statements and actions on race, and his responses indicated that he took many of those criticisms seriously. Only four days after writing to the *New York Times*, Wilmore sent a memorandum to a Commission staffer, Oscar McCloud, in which he said that he would "insist" that the Commission focus more on "what has been called 'the white problem' in race relations.

That is to say, upon the people we have really missed these last three years - the white, suburban Presbyterians, the people in the pews - upon their enlightenment and their involvement *with* and *alongside of* Negroes....”¹⁴⁶ Wilmore added that,

...the only hope for a really meaningful CORAR program in this overwhelmingly white church...is the involvement of our people, somehow, in what is happening in the South - the *reinforcement* of what is happening there - and the involvement of white people in breaking down the barriers which still exist where *they* live and work and play and send their children to school.¹⁴⁷

Days after issuing a blistering castigation of the white liberals of the *New York Times*, Wilmore clearly had on his mind the gulf emerging between black radicals and white laypeople, and recommitted his organization not to “go it alone,” but to re-engage those white people in the pews. This was not a complete turnabout. In December 1966 correspondence, Wilmore had called the Commission “a catalyst and vehicle for launching a strong interdenominational and interfaith thrust into the heart of the problem - the predominantly white, middle-class laity of American Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.”¹⁴⁸

The UPCUSA and the United Church of Christ would also publish a pamphlet in 1970 entitled, *The White Problem*, including six essays, two of them by Metz Rollins and Preston Williams (a fellow black Presbyterian who succeeded Wilmore as chair of the NCBC Theological Commission).¹⁴⁹ In his essay, Rollins argued that the mythology that supports racism and white power must be destroyed, and said that if institutions, including the church, cannot be reformed, “then the institutions are expendable in the eyes of black people.”¹⁵⁰ Rollins also said,

Blacks understand the pervasiveness of white racism; so they question the moral capacity of whites to do the right thing by them. White appeals to the black community to trust, to believe in, the good intentions of the white community fall upon deaf ears.¹⁵¹

Rollins criticized Martin Luther King, Jr. for having hoped that white Americans' "conscience" ... would shine through once they understood the legitimate demands of black Americans," and said that "many blacks sustained themselves on the hope that whites, despite their racism, had the capacity for self-criticism, the ability to repent for ... injustices."¹⁵² "Blacks know from hard experience that white racism will not yield except under great pressure."¹⁵³

"Quiet, Worried Men"

Wilmore received plenty of mail from white laypeople unhappy with his leadership on behalf of their church. One telling example was a letter from P. E. McAllister, an Indiana businessman, who had written to Wilmore and four other black Presbyterian clergymen (Edler Hawkins, Bryant George, LeRoy Patrick, and Isaiah Pogue) in September 1966, objecting to their joint statement endorsing Black Power.¹⁵⁴ McAllister said that while many ministers supported Black Power, it was laypeople who actually had to deal with "real world" racial politics, and who were better suited to resolving such issues.¹⁵⁵ McAllister complained that "your statement is blaming ME for this hundred years of intolerance," claiming that he had "not been particularly intolerant or bigoted toward the Negro."¹⁵⁶ At the close of the five-page letter which included elements of thoughtfulness, friendliness, hostility, and white supremacy, McAllister wrote,

Now this is a very windy, extremely unprofound statement indicating one thing to you: the enormity of the misunderstanding. There are millions upon millions of Americans like myself who don't understand. All they know of Negro oppression or intolerance is what they read, often from Negro writers whose justifiable bitterness is never quite appreciated... but whose anger at "whitey" generates only compensatory white irritation. I don't think many of us are going to move very far out of our prejudicial ruts until we have a reason. It is hard to take [an inflammatory black radical] into one's bosom and say,

“This is just the type to help share the power structure with us. We know he has a compassionate, unprejudiced heart.” You want us to open our hearts to a bird like this, when even you must have objections. But he’s the guy making the papers as typical of black power and not quiet, worried men like yourself.¹⁵⁷

McAllister added,

For some reason or other, the approach our church is using has not moved the average Presbyterian.... We are not getting the picture and no one is telling us why.... In the meantime, most of us are afraid of black power because in the past six months it has not meant opportunity, it has come to mean violence and brutal, bloody vindictive domination.... Which power dominates - the one you are explaining or the one getting most of the notoriety and influencing most of the action.¹⁵⁸

The remarkably self-aware McAllister highlighted, again, the gulf between white laypeople and two groups of which Wilmore was a member: Black Power radicals and denominational leaders open to such radicalism. McAllister exemplified northern white discomfort with Black Power, and with being blamed for the racism they had long attributed only to southern whites. His letter pointed to Wilmore’s tendency to back Black Power radicals to the hilt, albeit in Wilmore’s typical demeanor as a “quiet, worried man” who indeed had objections to certain movement elements but usually kept those objections to himself.

In one instance, Wilmore uncharacteristically did not keep those objections to himself, divulging them in a letter to another white lay-critic. In a February 1967 letter to a Nebraska banker who objected to Wilmore’s support for Adam Clayton Powell, Wilmore wrote,

One of the problems we have as Negro leaders is that we do not determine symbols for the Negro poor. We can do our best to reconstruct and reinterpret the symbols which they lift up and in the case of a man like Powell, seek to influence his personal conduct and strengthen his sense of moral responsibility for the cause that we all espouse. It is a matter of great misfortune that this incident has distracted us from our real purposes in the movement for racial justice in this country. But you surmised correctly that the situation is extremely difficult for all of us who must keep in contact with the masses of people in the festering ghettos of our great metropolitan areas and at the same time give them the best leadership that our wisdom and ethical sensitivities demand.... In the

present situation... [we must keep] our eyes on the real evil of racial segregation and discrimination and not on the imprudence of one man.¹⁵⁹

Wilmore did not always appreciate the means with which black activists expressed themselves, whether through the Watts rioters' violence, Stokely Carmichael's "black power," or Adam Clayton Powell's antics, but he continually sought both to defend such expressions, and to explain the meaning behind them to white people, knowing that white support was necessary for the success even of the Black Power movement.

A Solid Black Hyphen

In September 1968, Gayraud Wilmore was interviewed for an article in *Presbyterian Life* by Janet Harbison. Although the article did not acknowledge their past and ongoing associations, Harbison and Wilmore were fellow Princeton residents and both attended the historic black Witherspoon Street Presbyterian Church. They had also shared the experience of being the only "others" - a white woman and a black man - on the otherwise all-white-male C67 drafting committee. In the article, Harbison introduced Wilmore as "a power among Negro churchmen and a philosopher of the black power movement as well as one of the principal actors in it."¹⁶⁰ Harbison noted Wilmore's opposition to the white-led paternalistic integrationism of the early 1960s, quoting from his recent writings that, "church integration, like integration in society, has always been a one-way street with the assumption that everything black was subordinate and inferior and would have to be given up for everything white."¹⁶¹ Wilmore had also criticized the white church for having "attempted to make over the black man and his church in its own image

and to force the black community into the mold of the white society to which the white church has always been in bondage.”¹⁶²

Harbison explained, however, that Wilmore’s support for Black Power included certain qualifiers.

... Wilmore, who believes in black power, in the need for black people to be themselves, to control their own destinies as much as any men can, and to make their unique contribution to the society in which they live, does not see our society developing into two halves which will retreat behind their walls and glare at each other. “I see a sort of checkerboard society, with black groups and white groups side by side, not letting the two communities polarize and harden so that no community is possible.”¹⁶³

Harbison then moved on from Wilmore’s “checkerboard society” metaphor to propose a different image to represent his involvement both in Black Power and in a majority-white denomination.

Wilmore, himself, has been described as a hyphen between the black community and the white, and the figure is apt if you assume a solid black hyphen. For there is no doubt about Wilmore’s blackness; his relatively new and bushy mustache and his Afro haircut are true signs of his inward state.¹⁶⁴

Harbison then described Wilmore as an interpreter, in response to Wilmore’s own explanation of Black Power’s need - as noted by the *New York Times* - for white involvement.

He does feel a duty to interpret the two communities to each other. “My understanding of the black power movement is that it recognizes the fact that the black community in this country needs the help of white people. The question is, how is that help given? White liberals can give more than money; they can help black people to secure their proper share of influence and power. This is best done by ballots and by removing the obstacles that lie in the way of black consolidation.” Wilmore feels that “in some instances, nowadays, whites can work alongside blacks in the ghetto. In other cases they no longer can, or perhaps never could have.”¹⁶⁵

Wilmore gave a couple of examples of what he meant by a “checkerboard society.” He noted that while teaching at the predominantly white Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, in Harbison’s

words, “he lived in a black neighborhood and always kept his roots there.”¹⁶⁶ He hoped other black ministers in white contexts might do similarly.

I’ve been trying to work with the younger men. I tell them, “you don’t have to bury yourself in a white village and never see the dark of night again. You don’t have to break your ties with the black community.” There is a level of colorlessness at which some people can move into an all-white situation and just minister. At another level, color is a very important thing. It is dangerous to rip a man out of his background.¹⁶⁷

Again noting the need for a relationship between black and white communities, as well as the concerns Wilmore has expressed at times about of the waning influence of black Christian leaders in the now-radicalized black community, Wilmore added,

The United Presbyterian Church is fortunate in the kind of black talent within its ranks. Compared to other churches, we have probably the highest incidence of college education among our black churchmen. One great need for the church nowadays is to use these people to provide a link between white and black. Up to now, we have tried to absorb these people within the white church to such an extent that they have lost influence in the black community.¹⁶⁸

Again, in terms of this fear of lost influence, his concern with how black activists expressed themselves, and some nostalgia for his days in campus ministry,

“We have to keep the youth,” Gayraud Wilmore submits. He is glad when he has a chance to spend some time on campuses with the new breed of Negro students, even though he occasionally finds the ways they choose to express themselves a bit horrifying. “They have tremendous resources of energy, especially the black collegians. We have to win the right to speak to them, though. I feel exhilarated when I have the chance to help them.”¹⁶⁹

Having served as the face of the “white” church’s racial justice effort, and as one of the most influential Christian proponents of Black Power, in his roles with CORAR and the C67 drafting committee as well as with the NCBC, Wilmore had become neither an integrationist “hyphen,” nor a separatist defender of “blackness” - rather he had become a “solid black hyphen.” He recognized the need, both theologically and pragmatically, for a continued relationship between

black and white communities. But when push came to shove - when urban rebels, Adam Clayton Powell, or other black people faced criticism or worse from white people, even when he found the rhetoric of some black militants “horrible,” Gayraud Wilmore always knew which side he was on. Throughout his career he continually found himself called to defend such militants by translating their “horrible” rhetoric into language accessible to white people, pressing white people to respond by addressing the underlying causes of racial injustice.

Wilmore’s white audience, however, continued to become harder to reach every year. In 1963, northern white moderates, including United Presbyterians, had been convicted by television coverage of the brutal treatment of protesters in Birmingham, and by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” These white moderates had joined with African Americans to support a “foreign mission” to “march through the South,” perhaps not “the way Sherman did,” but certainly with a crusading spirit. Some had come in person, like John Coventry Smith, Eugene Carson Blake, Tom Michael, Bob Stone, Bob Beech, Marshal Scott, and the other men who traveled to Hattiesburg to participate in the Ministers’ Project. Others had contributed to the crafting and promulgation of C67, had written letters to Congress, or had donated money. These Northerners rejoiced at the successes of demonstrations in the South and legislative efforts in Washington. Yet the expansion of racial activism into the black rebellions in non-southern cities in 1964-68 gave them pause. Were they the real racists? Had their foreign mission, even their Shermanesque march now entered their own neighborhoods? In the late 1960s, people like P. E. McAllister, the “white backlash” electoral candidates, and the editors of the *New York Times* had become more representative of northern white moderate attitudes toward racial justice activism - juxtaposed against black leaders like Stokely Carmichael, H. Rap Brown,

Albert Cleage, and James Forman. White Presbyterians and other mainline Protestants were in for one further shock. A new target for black activism was not just northern white society, but the church itself. Even a denomination which had contributed millions to racial justice work was now charged with complicity in racist oppression.

¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

² Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 59. This incident also recalled Wilmore's criticisms of his white officers in Italy: "White men who knew little about Black life back home assumed leadership over Black young men..." "white field officers... inflated with their white Southern college degrees, devoid of any rudimentary understanding of Black culture and religion..." Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

³ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁴ "Presbyterians Urged to Hire More Negroes," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 28, 1966, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

⁵ "Presbyterians Urged to Hire More Negroes."

⁶ UPCUSA march participants included Wilmore, Rollins, McCloud, Robert "Bob" Beech, John H. Marion, Jr., and five other people named in the memo, almost all ministers. CORAR provided \$500 in support of the march, and the BNM "made available to Dr. King" a "Sani-Cruiser (a truck-mounted unit completely equipped with camping facilities)." "United Presbyterians Join Mississippi March," Religion and Race Memo #35, July 15, 1966, issued by the UPCUSA CORAR, "Black Power," RG 503, Box 10, Folder 2, Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Board of Christian Education. Office of Church and Society, Series II, Subject Files, 1947-1980, Presbyterian Historical Society.

"The unfortunate prominence of the term 'black power' comes as a potentially divisive element in the civil rights movement at a time when closer cooperation among the various organizations seeking human justice is critically needed. The words have become a catch-phrase, much used by friends and foes of the movement and understood in dozens of different ways... CORAR subscribes to the broad and positive meanings of the phrase, and to the goals we believe were being sought when the cry of 'black power' began to be heard widespread during the recent Meredith Mississippi March. These goals - of voting power, economic power, and the power of people united for a cause that is just - are goals that have been sought throughout the civil rights movement. They are a part of the larger pattern of justice and reconciliation which CORAR was created to seek." Victor L. Jameson, "'Black Power' and its Meanings," Religion and Race Memo #35, July 15, 1966, issued by the UPCUSA CORAR, "Black Power," RG 503, Box 10, Folder 2, Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Board of Christian Education. Office of Church and Society, Series II, Subject Files, 1947-1980, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁷ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64; Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 17. For the complete statement, see "Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966," in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 23-30). See also, in terms of Wilmore's early defense of Black Power, his August 15, 1966, letter to the editor of the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*:

"White Americans are asking today why Negro Americans have chosen 'Black Power' as their rallying cry in the civil rights struggle. It would be more to the point to ask white Americans why they permit the real estate interests of the nation to play upon their false pride, fears and insecurities in the multi-million dollar power drive to defeat federal fair housing legislation. Congress... has the obligation to reaffirm the moral foundation of a free society. It will be liberty herself whose dignity is besmirched if the Congress yields to crocodile tears over the rights of private property and the precious privilege of practicing racism in the market place." Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., "Housing Bill 'Power Drive' Charged," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1966, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

⁹ James Cone pointed out that the NCBC other early proponents of Black Theology "addressed their concerns to the white church and its theologians. That was also why NCBC statements were published in the *New York Times* and not the Harlem *Amsterdam News* or some other news organ in the black community." In an endnote, he added, "In a discussion of this concern with Gayraud Wilmore, he said that he 'remembered the debate about that question in Benjamin Payton's office at the NCC. We really decided that more black folk would see it in the *New York Times* than in the *Amsterdam News* and would take it more seriously in the former.'" James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984), pp. 113, 240 (note 24).

¹⁰ “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” pp. 29-30. AME refers to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, AME Zion to the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, CME to the Christian (formerly “Colored”) Methodist Episcopal Church, and UCC to the United Church of Christ.

¹¹ “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” pp. 29-30.

¹² “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” pp. 29-30. James Cone wrote that Hedgeman was the only woman who was even asked to sign the statement. Cone, *For My People*, p. 133.

¹³ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 17.

¹⁴ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 64.

¹⁵ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 10-11, 18.

Also, Cone said that in the late 1960s, the NCBC “wrote several statements, responding to the political crises of the time and also laying the foundation for the subsequent development of black theology.”

Cone, *For My People*, p. 14.

Also, “The ‘Black Power Statement’ of the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC), in 1966, initiated the development of a theological consciousness that separated radical black Christianity from the religion of white churches. It set in motion a series of events that led seminary professors and other members of the black clergy to create what has since been called black theology.”

Cone, *For My People*, p. 1.

¹⁶ Cone also named Albert Cleage as another key figure in the early development of Black Theology and the NCBC, although he “eventually became too much of a separatist for most NCBC members” and his views were “too sectarian to gain wide acceptance among members of the black clergy who had studied historical criticism in white universities and seminaries. But Cleage inspired us all, even though we could not accept his most radical conclusions.” Cone, *For My People*, pp. 18-19.

Cone also said, on a more personal level, “No one has influenced my thinking on black theology more than Gayraud S. Wilmore.” Cone, *For My People*, p. xi.

¹⁷ Twenty-seven of the signatories are listed as affiliated with Episcopal (8), Presbyterian (7) Methodist (4), or UCC/Congregational (4) denominations or churches, or with regional or national ecumenical bodies like the Connecticut Council of Churches (1), the Detroit Council of Churches (1), and the NCC (2). The other twenty-one are listed as affiliated with the AME (5), AMEZ (2), CME (2), or various Baptist churches or denominations (11), or are not listed with any affiliation (1). “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” pp. 29-30.

James Cone also wrote that most of the NCBC’s ministers were in white denominations. Cone, *For My People*, p. 25.

¹⁸ Cone, *For My People*, p. 24. Quoting from *NCBC Newsletter*, June 1968, p. 5.

¹⁹ Cone, *For My People*, p. 24. Quoting from *NCBC Newsletter*, June 1968, p. 5.

²⁰ Cone, *For My People*, p. 25.

²¹ To be fair, Cone’s point was that these preachers were “best suited to the task” in comparison to black seminary professors, rather than in comparison to preachers in historically black denominations. Cone, *For My People*, p. 25.

²² Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 64.

²³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 14.

²⁴ Cone, *For My People*, p. 14.

²⁵ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65. Interestingly, Rollins was not one of the signatories of the “Black Power Statement.”

²⁶ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65; Cone, *For My People*, p. 24. The Commission was also paying the salary of Hosea Williams, an SCLC official, Martin Luther King, Jr. associate, and co-leader (with John Lewis) of the first attempted Selma-to-Montgomery march on “Bloody Sunday.” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65.

²⁷ Cone, *For My People*, p. 18.

²⁸ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 14, 18.

²⁹ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 14, 210 (note 3).

³⁰ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 14, 210 (note 3).

³¹ The NCBC was headquartered in Convent Avenue Baptist Church in Harlem. Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 65.

³² "Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966," pp. 29-30. "North of the Mason-Dixon Line" excludes the five members from Maryland, Missouri, and Washington, D.C., therefore only seven members hailed from the former Confederate States of America. Sixteen were listed as from New York City, one from Haverstraw, New York, four from Pennsylvania, four from Massachusetts, three from Maryland, two each from Illinois, Ohio, Texas, Tennessee, and North Carolina, and one each from Connecticut, New Jersey, California, Indiana, Minnesota, Michigan, Iowa, Missouri, Georgia, and the District of Columbia. Many of the signatories worked for national denominational or ecumenical offices or agencies, and most major denominations were headquartered in New York City at the time.

³³ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁵ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

³⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

³⁷ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

³⁸ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

³⁹ Cone, *For My People*, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, revised ed., p. 47; "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)"; Wilmore, "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations," p. 17; Bauer and Wilmore, "Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1."

⁴¹ Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, first ed., p. 71.

⁴² Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, first ed., p. 71.

⁴³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 40.

⁴⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

For more on the genesis of the NCBC, its relationship to the NCC, the division of the NCC's September 1967 conference on urban problems into black and white caucuses, and the NCBC's first formal meeting in Dallas in October 1967, see Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, pp. 18-20.

For the statements of those black and white NCC caucuses see "The Church and the Urban Crisis: Statements from Black and White Caucuses, National Council of Churches Conference on the Church and Urban Tensions, Washington, D.C., September 27-30, 1967," in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 43-47).

Also on the NCC racial division, see Cone, *For My People*, pp. 14-16.

This division of caucuses mirrored a similar division in SNCC in December 1966, in which "Whites were urged to return to their own communities to fight against racism at its source." Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 22 (note 6).

See also, "for the early history of the NCBC, with a brief description of its several public statements," Leon Watts, "The National Committee of Black Churchmen" (*Christianity and Crisis*, Vol. 30, No. 18, November 1970, pp. 237-243; and Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, pp. 262-306. Both sources are noted in Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 22 (note 5).

⁴⁵ “The most intense and destructive wave of racial violence the nation had ever witnessed came in 1967. Violence convulsed Boston, Buffalo, Cincinnati, New Haven, Providence, Wilmington, Cambridge, Maryland, and a hundred other cities.” The violence was most intense in Detroit and in Newark, the latter a city with “the nation’s highest rates of black joblessness, condemned housing, crime, new cases of tuberculosis, and maternal mortality,” ruled by a “callous, corrupt, almost all-white city administration.” Police and National Guardsmen used live ammunition to quell the rebellion, killing twenty-five African Americans, wounding 1,200, and arresting 1,300. The insurrection caused \$10 million in property damage. Sitkoff, *The Struggle for Black Equality*, pp. 187-188.

The Detroit rebellion later that month saw forty-three deaths. Cone, *For My People*, p. 43.

Sitkoff would have been on more stable ground to call this the most intense wave of violence among urban rebellions in the 1960s. “Wave[s] of racial violence the nation had... witnessed” surely should include the Civil War, wars and extermination campaigns waged by white Americans against American Indians, lynchings, rebellions by enslaved people, and perhaps slavery itself. Several such other occurrences of racial violence involved larger numbers of fatalities and casualties. Even among urban riots/rebellions, the 1863 New York City Draft Riots inflicted more fatalities and casualties.

⁴⁶ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 59. Wilmore also recalled this incident elsewhere, relating it to his experiences in Watts: “So I was on the scene in Newark, ducking some bullets in a telephone booth outside of that housing project they were doing a lot of shooting in, I was at Watts when some of our laypeople and other denominational people put up a barricade against the motorcycle, what was that name of that motorcycle gang in LA? [Hell’s Angels].” Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁴⁷ Wilmore noted Cave’s presence at the conference, and Cone noted the presence of NCBC member Nathan Wright, and of “several NCBC members, including Gayraud Wilmore.” Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, September 16, 2017; Cone, *For My People*, p. 37.

Cave was not a signatory on the July 1966 Black Power Statement, the November 1966 “Racism and the Elections” Statement, the July 1969 Black Theology Statement, or the 1969 “A Message to the Church from Oakland,” but he was a signatory on the 1970 “Black Declaration of Independence.” Warner R. Traynham, *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective* (Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973).

⁴⁸ Cone, *For My People*, p. 37; “The Black Power Conference,” accessed June 11, 2019, <http://riseupnewark.com/chapters/chapter-3/part-3/the-black-power-conference/>.

⁴⁹ Cone, *For My People*, p. 37.

⁵⁰ “The Black Power Conference.” See also Logan Lockwood, “1967 Newark Black Power Conference,” April 19, 2017, accessed June 11, 2019, <http://blackpower.web.unc.edu/2017/04/1967-newark-black-power-conference/>.

⁵¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, February 6, 2017 and September 16, 2017.

⁵² Tiamoyo Karenga, “Maulana Karenga (1941-),” *BlackPast*, February 12, 2007, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/karenga-maulana-c-1943/>.

⁵³ Karenga, “Maulana Karenga (1941-).”

“The influence of Maulana Karenga during the 1960s and after has been enormous among black cultural nationalists.” Cone, *For My People*, p. 221.

See also, Molefi Kete Asante, *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait* (Malden, Massachusetts, Polity Press, 2009).

⁵⁴ Karenga, “Maulana Karenga (1941-).”

⁵⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

⁵⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

⁵⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

“I am convinced - I and Clarence Cave... were further radicalized in our Christian faith by that encounter. I say ‘further’ to indicate that thinking about and making clear our relationship to God through Jesus Christ somehow brought us together with West Coast radicalism not as separate movements, but as one unique religious consciousness. Clarence and I were best friends when I and Lee attended his Faith Church in Germantown, Phila., and both of us came away from that Newark airport [hotel] meeting feeling that our half-baked faith in Blackness as a key to our self- and historical understanding of life had been fundamentally certified and enhanced. We later agreed that it was something like a second conversion experience.” Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, September 16, 2017.

⁵⁸ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

⁵⁹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

⁶⁰ Esther, esp. 4:14 (NRSV).

⁶¹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, e-mail messages to the author, February 6, 2017 and July 31, 2017. See also Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, September 16, 2017.

⁶² Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 5.

⁶³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 17. Cone quoted from Wilmore’s “Our Heritage and Our Hope,” which Cone described as “an address given on the tenth anniversary of the NCBC,” “excerpts [of which] are included in the NCBC *Newsletter*, Fall 1981, pp. 3-4.” Cited in Cone, *For My People*, p. 214 (note 39).

Also, note that “legion” is militaristic language.

⁶⁴ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁵ Cone, *For My People*, p. 42.

⁶⁶ Cone, *For My People*, p. 43.

⁶⁷ Cone, *For My People*, p. 43.

⁶⁸ James H. Cone, “Chapter 11: Martin, Malcolm, and Black Theology,” Daniel Chetti and M. P. Joseph, eds., *Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice* (Cross Junction, Tiruvalla 689 101, Kerala: The Christava Sahitya Samiti, 1998), Religion Online, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-11-martin-malcolm-and-black-theology-by-james-h-cone/>.

⁶⁹ Cone, *For My People*, p. 43.

“According to Leon Watts and Gayraud Wilmore, both of whom were present at the Dallas convocation, the issue of the name was discussed. Some of the chief actors in the NCNC ‘felt that they had to be careful not to panic some of the more conservative brothers and compromise on the more radical title’ (Wilmore). However, I think that the ambiguity reflected in whether to use ‘Black’ or ‘Negro’ in the name of the new organization is much deeper and more complex than suggested in Wilmore’s comment. Black clergy radicals were making a move away from Martin King and toward Malcolm X, away from an emphasis on love of whites to an accent on love of blacks, and that created an identity crisis in their Christian identity. I am sure that Watts and Wilmore made the move from ‘Negro’ to ‘Black’ without much difficulty. But their easy movement to black does not negate the deeper cultural and theological crisis, which they also must have experienced. A careful reading of the documents of black radical clergy cannot fail to reveal that all of us were involved in this crisis.” Cone, *For My People*, p. 221 (note 24).

⁷⁰ Cone, *For My People*, p. 43. See also pp. 44-48.

⁷¹ Cone, *For My People*, p. 14.

⁷² According to Wilmore, he served as acting director of the NCC's CORAR in the interval between the directorships of Bob Spike and Benjamin Payton, which would have been in early 1966. Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 62.

In fact, Wilmore served in that role after, not before, Payton's tenure. "Early in 1967" the NCC's CORAR "disappeared into the NCC's bureaucracy, becoming a part of a new Department of Social Justice, which included five other special task forces of the council as well as the commission. Benjamin Payton was the head of this new agency, but he surprised his colleagues when in early May 1967, he resigned and left New York to become the president of Benedict College in South Carolina. For several months there was no permanent director." "Gayraud Wilmore was Payton's temporary replacement, briefly assuming responsibility for the NCC agency as well as the comparable organization within his own denomination." Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 187, 196 (note 71).

Wilmore was also listed as "serving as acting director of the NCC Department of Social Justice" in a September 1967 UPCUSA CORAR memorandum regarding the NCC conference that month on "the Church and the Urban Crisis. "Conference Scheduled on Urban Tensions," Religion and Race Memo No. 49, September 1967, issued by the UPCUSA CORAR, "Black Power," RG 503, Box 10, Folder 2, Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Board of Christian Education. Office of Church and Society, Series II, Subject Files, 1947-1980, Presbyterian Historical Society.

⁷³ "Conference Scheduled on Urban Tensions."

⁷⁴ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 14-15. See also pp. 15-17 for more on this conference.

⁷⁵ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 18.

⁷⁶ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 19.

⁷⁸ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁷⁹ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁸⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁸¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017; Wilmore, "Recollections," pp. 59, 63.

⁸² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁸³ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64; Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁸⁴ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64. Quoting from *The Minutes of the General Assembly (1968) Part II. Reports*, p. 174.

⁸⁵ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, March 4, 2017.

⁸⁶ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

⁸⁷ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

⁸⁸ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 59.

⁸⁹ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁹⁰ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁹¹ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 64.

⁹² Cone, *For My People*, p. 19.

⁹³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 19.

⁹⁴ Cone, *For My People*, p. 19; Gayraud S. Wilmore, "The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968)," in Warner R. Traynham, *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective* (Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 83-96 (Appendix D)).

⁹⁵ Wilmore, "The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968)," p. 86.

⁹⁶ Wilmore, "The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968)," p. 95.

⁹⁷ As previously discussed, Wilmore frequently uses quotation marks around key terms in his writing. He does so to emphasize such words, rather than to indicate that an idea is not his own.

⁹⁸ Cone, *For My People*, p. 19; James H. Cone, *Black Theology & Black Power* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997).

⁹⁹ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁰ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 77.

¹⁰¹ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, pp. 77-78.

¹⁰² Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 78.

¹⁰³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 23.

For the text of this statement, see “Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 100-102).

That same year, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary (JCSTS), the only historically black Presbyterian seminary still functioning at the time, moved from Charlotte, North Carolina to join ITC. Paul Roberts, “Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary: History, impact, future,” *The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 12, 2018, accessed August 19, 2019, <https://pres-outlook.org/2018/12/johnson-c-smith-theological-seminary-history-impact-future/>.

¹⁰⁴ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁵ Cone, *For My People*, p. 23.

¹⁰⁶ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 38-39. Quoting from Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983), p. 199.

¹⁰⁷ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65.

¹⁰⁸ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972).

¹⁰⁹ Judith Weisenfeld, *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

¹¹⁰ Wilmore, “The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968),” pp. 83-84.

¹¹¹ Wilmore, “The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968),” p. 84. Note Wilmore’s frequent use of quotation marks around key terms/phrases here.

¹¹² Cone, *For My People*, p. 106.

¹¹³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 106.

¹¹⁴ Cone, *For My People*, p. 106.

¹¹⁵ Cone, *For My People*, p. 106. Quoting from Wilmore, “Our Heritage and Our Hope,” *NCBC Newsletter*, p. 3.

¹¹⁶ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, February 6, 2017.

¹¹⁷ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

¹¹⁸ *Book of Confessions*, pp. 303-312.

¹¹⁹ *Book of Confessions*, p. 303.

¹²⁰ *Book of Confessions*, p. 308.

¹²¹ Wilmore, “The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968),” p. 85.

¹²² Wilmore, “The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968),” p. 86.

¹²³ Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

¹²⁴ “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” p. 26; Wilmore and Huenemann, “Path toward Racial Justice.”

¹²⁵ “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” p. 27.

¹²⁶ Cone, *For My People*, p. 87.

¹²⁷ Cone, *For My People*, p. 87.

¹²⁸ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 64. Quoting from *Minutes of the (1967) General Assembly, Part 1*, pp. 398-339. Wilmore also said of the G.A.’s statement, “it resounds with the unmistakable accents of the black caucus of the denomination of the time, and show [sic] how much some leaders of this 95% white church trusted its black leadership and why the General Assembly remained committed to them in the Black Manifesto crisis of 1969.” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 68 (note 18).

¹²⁹ “Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” p. 24.

¹³⁰ “Religious Groups Ask Passage of Civil Rights Bill,” *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 8, 1967, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

¹³¹ “Religious Groups Ask Passage of Civil Rights Bill.”

¹³² “Religious Groups Ask Passage of Civil Rights Bill.”

¹³³ This statement was published in the *New York Times* on November 6th. Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 18; “Racism and the Elections: The American Dilemma, 1966,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 31-34), p. 31.

¹³⁴ “Racism and the Elections: The American Dilemma, 1966,” p. 31.

¹³⁵ “Racism and the Elections: The American Dilemma, 1966,” pp. 33-34.

¹³⁶ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 18. See also Cone, *For My People*, p. 86.

¹³⁷ Roy Wilkins of the NAACP publicly and harshly condemned Powell. Wilmore aligned with others, like Floyd McKissick of CORE, and “came to Mr. Powell's support... with a bitter attack on Congress.” M. S. Handler, “Wilkins Accuses Powell of Apathy,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 1967, p. 29. I have not found text of Wilmore’s statement, which would have occurred on January 13, 1967.

The NCBC also issued its third official statement, “The Powell Affair - A Crisis of Morals and Faith,” criticizing Congress’s exclusion of Powell. Julius H. Bailey, “National Conference of Black Churchmen” ed. Nina Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 380. See also Leon W. Watts, II, “The National Committee of Black Churchmen” (*Christianity and Crisis* 30, 1970, pp. 237-243).

¹³⁸ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 18.

¹³⁹ “...and a Crisis of Confidence,” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1967, p. 38.

¹⁴⁰ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967,

“Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d.,” RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20, Presbyterian Historical Society;

Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., “Crisis in Civil Rights,” *The New York Times*, signed February 27, 1967, published March 5, 1967. The published version was revised and significantly shortened in comparison to the February 17 version on CORAR letterhead.

¹⁴¹ Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967; Wilmore, Jr., “Crisis in Civil Rights.”

¹⁴² Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967.

¹⁴³ Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967.

¹⁴⁴ Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967. Note Wilmore’s use of militaristic language here. The next line after “give discomfort to the enemy” is “‘Friends’ will just have to stay out of the line of fire.”

¹⁴⁵ In September 1968, Wilmore said, “my understanding of the black power movement is that it recognizes the fact that the black community in this country needs the help of white people.” Harbison, “The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.,” p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ He added that, “the only hope for a really meaningful CORAR program in this overwhelmingly white church...is the involvement of our people, somehow, in what is happening in the South - the *reinforcement* of what is happening there - and the involvement of white people in breaking down the barriers which still exist where *they* live and work and play and send their children to school.” Gay Wilmore to Oscar McCloud, memorandum, February 21, 1967, “Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d.,” RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁴⁷ Gay Wilmore to Oscar McCloud, memorandum, February 21, 1967.

¹⁴⁸ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. to Dr. John Coleman, December 5, 1966, “Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d.,” RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁴⁹ Dieter T. Hessel and Everett L. Perry, eds., *The White Problem* (The United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, 1970). There was also some participation from several other denominations. Preston Williams and Leslie Galbraith, who, with Rollins, wrote three of the six chapters/articles, were UPCUSA, as were the editors, Dieter Hessel and Everett Perry.

¹⁵⁰ J. Metz Rollins, Jr., “As the Black Community Sees It,” in Dieter T. Hessel and Everett L. Perry, eds., *The White Problem* (The United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, 1970, pp. 5-13), pp. 6, 9.

¹⁵¹ Rollins, Jr., “As the Black Community Sees It,” p. 8.

¹⁵² Rollins, Jr., “As the Black Community Sees It,” p. 8.

¹⁵³ Rollins, Jr., “As the Black Community Sees It,” p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ P. E. McAllister, letter to Gayraud Wilmore, Isaiah Pogue, LeRoy Patrick, Edler Hawkins, and Bryant George, September 9, 1966, "Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d.," RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁵⁵ He said that most Presbyterian ministers he knew "get a big charge out of" the issue, and criticized "the preachers who theorize and verbalize and philosophize about the problems of integration," and "invariably resolve them by retreating to the study," while they should instead leave more of the decision-making to "those most directly and personally involved." McAllister, letter to Wilmore et al, September 9, 1966.

¹⁵⁶ McAllister, letter to Wilmore et al, September 9, 1966.

¹⁵⁷ McAllister, letter to Wilmore et al, September 9, 1966.

¹⁵⁸ McAllister, letter to Wilmore et al, September 9, 1966.

¹⁵⁹ Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., letter to Julian H. Hopkins, February 10, 1967, "Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d.," RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20, Presbyterian Historical Society.

¹⁶⁰ Janet Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr." (*Presbyterian Life*, September 1, 1968, pp. 7-9, 33), p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8.

¹⁶² Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8.

¹⁶³ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8. While "checkerboard" is a more vivid image, "chess board" would have provided more of a sense of strategy, and played on Wilmore's own personal love for the game of chess. Turner, *My Life*, p. 121.

¹⁶⁴ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 8.

¹⁶⁶ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 33.

¹⁶⁷ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 33.

¹⁶⁸ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 33.

¹⁶⁹ Harbison, "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.," p. 33.

CHAPTER 5

THE BLACK MANIFESTO AND REPARATIONS, 1969

Introducing the Manifesto

Forman at Riverside

On May 4, 1969 James Forman marched into the most prominent church in the mainline Protestant establishment, the racially diverse, interdenominational Riverside Church in the City of New York, over the protests of its Presbyterian pastor, Ernest Campbell, to present the Black Manifesto, with its demands that the nation's white churches and synagogues pay \$500 million in reparations to black people, due to those institutions' historical involvement in the enslavement and oppression of black Americans.¹

We are... demanding of the white Christian churches and Jewish synagogues, which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country. We are demanding \$500,000,000 from the Christian white churches and the Jewish synagogues. This total comes to 15 dollars per nigger.... \$15 a nigger is not a large sum of money and we know that the churches and synagogues have tremendous wealth, and its membership, white America, has profited from and still exploits black people.... Fifteen dollars for every black brother and sister in the United States is only a beginning of the reparations due us as a people who have been exploited and degraded, brutalized, killed and persecuted.... We are no longer afraid to demand our full rights as a people in this decadent society.²

James Forman was the SNCC official who had encouraged John Lewis in crafting the controversial first draft of his speech at the March on Washington, had worked with Fannie Lou Hamer and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to seat its delegation at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, had worked alongside Wilmore and CORAR in Mississippi, and had since joined the Black Panthers.³ In the weeks and months after his appearance at

Riverside, Forman and his associates made similar demands of many majority-white denominations, often delivered in-person at denominational headquarters and annual meetings. Forman also made such demands of predominantly white religious institutions including the National Council of Churches (NCC) and Union Theological Seminary.

In keeping with the spirit of Black Power, black activists had finally had enough of white people always trying to stay in control of organizations and movements, and dramatically and defiantly demanded that they, not the white establishment, should control the pace of change, which included controlling the funding of social and racial empowerment programs. These activists rejected gradualism, paternalism, tokenism, patience, moderation, and liberal integrationism in favor of self-determination. While the Black Power Conference in Newark was a decisive turning point for Wilmore, it was the Black Manifesto crisis which drove the deepest wedge between black and white supporters of racial justice. According to James Cone, “no other event made a greater impact on the white religious establishment than did this document,” and this incident constituted “the climax of the attack by black clergy radicals on white religion.”⁴ It “sent shock waves throughout the white religious and theological communities.”⁵ According to Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright, “Manifesto-related events caused greater vibrations in the U.S. religious world than any other single human rights development in a decade of monumental happenings.”⁶

Some of Wilmore’s most important work as an interpreter, as a “solid black hyphen,” occurred in response to this wedge, limiting its damage and turning its effects toward constructive ends, helping white and black Christians to stay in relationship with one another

while at the same time insisting that justice - in the form of the payment of reparations - be done.

As Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Bishop Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr. put it,

In 1969 when James Forman stood in the sanctuary of Riverside Church in New York City and demanded five hundred million dollars in reparations... it was the mild and gentle Gayraud Wilmore who wrote what some would call a radical statement about the theological meaning of the *Black Manifesto*....⁷

These events also taught Wilmore something about the limits of his interpretive work. He realized that while, sometimes, there was a need for someone like him to translate the rhetoric of more provocative radicals into language more accessible to white moderates, at other times he needed to get out of the way, to avoid “blunting the razor sharpness” of such radicals, and to recognize the unique ways in which such radicals’ unconventional rhetoric and tactics could sometimes open a door to new possibilities for racial justice.

The events surrounding the Manifesto also highlighted Wilmore’s paradoxical position as a racially conscious African American and an official in the majority-white Presbyterian Church, a phenomenon which Wilmore himself has connected with the language of “double consciousness.”⁸ He was a radical, but also one who held institutional power, using that power against the institution itself by agreeing with the reparationist stance that his denomination’s wealth included ill-gotten gains, owed to African Americans. Yet, curiously, the Manifesto required not only a harsh indictment of an oppressive institution, but also an appeal to the conscience of that institution itself. Manifesto backers did not sue the denomination in a court of law, rather they asked that the denomination live up to its own ideals. Wilmore, the radical who was also a power-broker, was well-positioned to interpret those radical demands so as to sway the conscience of the oppressive institution.

Background

In the late 1960s, economics had become a more prominent aspect of the struggle for racial justice, including via the 1968 Poor People's Campaign, sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).⁹ The urban rebellions which centered on issues of both race and economics had elicited a variety of responses, including the 1968 report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders or the "Kerner Commission," which cited white racism as the primary cause of the urban rebellions.¹⁰ Religious denominations and organizations had pledged their financial support for anti-poverty and anti-racism efforts.¹¹ These good intentions opened the door to the claims of the Manifesto. Eugene Carson Blake, who by this time was chief executive of the World Council of Churches, pointed to these religious organizations' claims about human dignity in this respect, and NCC official Charles Spivey, Jr. said that the Manifesto demanded that such groups "put up or shut up."¹² Black leaders often felt that even when majority-white religious organizations did "put up," they often did so in a paternalistic, white-controlled fashion.¹³ At an NCBC meeting in October 1968, a speaker said, to great applause,

Let the church see that the Black Power Movement is assuming power and consolidating power, then the white church seeks to coopt it by funding its community organization programs and then coopting its leaders. The whites are always in control. They dictate what must be done.¹⁴

Of course, the church was not the only source for social welfare and anti-poverty programs. Since the Great Depression had demonstrated the churches' inability to address poverty on their own, the federal government had taken a more active role in such programming, as it expanded and began to fill many of the roles formerly occupied by religious institutions.¹⁵ These changes

included the New Deal, the G.I. bill, and the Great Society programs of the Johnson Administration - including Medicare, Medicaid, Head Start, the War on Poverty, and Civil and Voting Rights legislation.

While these concerns about racism and poverty, often referred to as the “crisis in the nation,” captured the attention of religious organizations and the government in 1968, an enterprise of particular importance to the Manifesto began earlier, in September 1967, with the creation of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO).¹⁶ This new organization sought to direct funds to local anti-poverty organizations.¹⁷ In contrast to the efforts decried above as paternalistic, IFCO intentionally provided an opportunity for “participation and self-determination to people shut out of power.”¹⁸ NCBC members Anna Arnold Hedgeman and Albert B. Cleage, Jr. had contributed to its creation.¹⁹ IFCO had twenty-five member organizations by 1969, including mission agencies of the American Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, United Presbyterian Church (UPCUSA), Presbyterian Church (U.S.), United Church of Christ (UCC), and Lutheran Church in America, as well as the American Jewish Committee and the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice.²⁰ The largest contributors were the Episcopal, American Baptist, and United Presbyterian denominations.²¹ Founded in the same month as the division of the NCC’s conference on the Church and the Urban Crisis, one of the reasons for IFCO’s founding was to be an “interlocutor or broker between whites and blacks who less and less were able to speak and act directly together.”²²

IFCO sponsored a National Black Economic Development Conference (NBEDC), to be held April 25-27, 1969 at Wayne State University in Detroit.²³ IFCO had intended for this

conference to be a rather traditional gathering of leaders and activists interested in promoting black economic development, with an emphasis on self-determination.²⁴ The conference did, however, exclude any white involvement - no white speakers, participants, or journalistic observers, which meant, among other things, that it received little national press coverage at all.²⁵ By this point, little had come of the Kerner Commission's recommendations, or of the National Urban League's "Domestic Marshall Plan," or of A. Philip Randolph's "Freedom Budget," each of which proposed massive anti-poverty investments.²⁶ Two of the major speakers at the conference were connected to Wilmore dating back to his Lincoln days: Julian Bond, SNCC activist and son of former Lincoln President Horace Mann Bond, and Milton Henry, who was now Vice President of the Republic of New Africa.²⁷

James Forman, who by then was serving as SNCC's director of international affairs, was a speaker at the conference.²⁸ While there has been a good deal of speculation about why Forman chose to use the NBEDC as the starting point for the Manifesto, researcher Amy Miracle suggests that this choice may not have been carefully considered.²⁹ She points out that Forman, in his autobiography, recalled being invited to a Detroit meeting of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers which was meeting at the same time as the NBEDC, and that, while he did have participation in the NBEDC on his mind, it was "low on his list of priorities."³⁰ In Detroit, Forman decided to present his reparations demands to the NBEDC, largely because of the NBEDC's sponsorship by predominantly white religious groups in the form of IFCO.³¹

On April 26, the second and final night of the NBEDC conference, Forman presented the Manifesto and asked that the conference vote whether to give the document its official endorsement.³² The motion carried by a vote of 187 to 63.³³ Some have questioned the integrity

of this vote, given, among other things, the fact that nearly 1,000 delegates had attended the conference.³⁴ Forman himself, according to Amy Miracle, “admitted that he used unconventional methods to gain approval for the Manifesto,” and said that “The only way to make [the] conference relevant was to take it over completely.”³⁵ However, since the vote was on the last night of the conference, many delegates had already left.³⁶ Also, when the conference reconvened the next morning, the executive director of IFCO, NBEDC conference chairman, and founding NCBC member Lucius Walker - who had proposed the NBEDC in the first place - announced that the conference had officially approved the document.³⁷ No delegates even made an attempt to have the conference rescind its decision.³⁸ In accordance with the Manifesto, the NBEDC, which later that summer dropped “National” to become the BEDC or “bed-cee,” became a permanent organization with a steering committee, largely independent of IFCO, with Forman as its primary spokesperson.³⁹ When the steering committee first met on July 11-13, they elected Calvin B. Marshall, a member of the board of directors of the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) and an African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) pastor from Brooklyn, as chairman.⁴⁰

The Manifesto seems to have been written by James Forman, albeit with possible contributions from Lucius Walker, Earl Allen, and perhaps even Gayraud Wilmore, as well as the possible influence of Albert B. Cleage, Jr.⁴¹ It consisted of two parts: an introduction, and a list of program/policy proposals. Historian James F. Findlay, Jr. describes it as “almost two separate documents.”⁴² The proposals themselves were relatively unremarkable, and not significantly different from the kinds of policy answers to the “crisis in the nation” proposed by the Kerner Commission, the Domestic Marshall Plan, the Freedom Budget, or the social agendas of the

mainline churches.⁴³ In fact, according to Findlay, “the most militant [NBEDC] delegates, chiefly nationalist black separatists, cast many of the negative ballots against the manifesto after Forman spoke because his program contained no hint of the creation of a separate black state somewhere in the South.”⁴⁴ The body of the Manifesto explained how the \$500 million was to be spent, including the creation of a southern land bank, four black publishing houses, four black television networks, a research skills center focused on black concerns, a training center in community organization and other skills, recognition and funding of the National Welfare Rights Organization, the establishment of a National Black Labor Strike and Defense Fund, the establishment of the International Black Appeal (a fundraising arm focused on promoting all of these demands, supporting African liberation movements, and creating a Black Anti-Defamation League), and the establishment of a black university in the South.⁴⁵

However, preceding and framing this relatively pedestrian set of concerns was the Manifesto’s introduction, which James Findlay characterizes as “a lengthy introduction of generalizations and exhortations reflecting Forman’s (and some of the delegates’) radical political and economic views,” and which Robert Lecky and Elliott Wright have described as “angry, revolutionary and somewhat socialistic.”⁴⁶ James Forman, an atheist, justified reparations based on historical conditions, revolutionary ideology, and a smattering of references to Christian history, scripture, and theology.⁴⁷ Detractors and even supporters of the Manifesto often pointed to the radicalism of this introduction as one of the major reasons for the reactions - ranging from lukewarm to hostile - that the document received among most majority-white religious institutions.⁴⁸ According to Gayraud Wilmore, it was this introduction which “caused the greatest alarm and the strongest rebuttal from the white church.”⁴⁹ The Manifesto combined its

unremarkable set of programs “in the context of black power and Third World revolutionary rhetoric and gave them a new urgency as totalistic approaches to liberation.”⁵⁰ Even at the original conference in Detroit, some NBEDC and IFCO members “expressed reservations about the ‘highly inflammatory’ nature” of the introduction or preamble.⁵¹ According to Findlay, Forman himself later “recalled he had been reluctant from the outset to make public the introduction, but had been overruled by his close associates,” a decision which was, in Findlay’s view, “a major tactical mistake.”⁵²

According to Wilmore, “the preamble was a caustic indictment of black accommodation and white racism. It called for the identification of black America with Africa and the repudiation of capitalism and imperialism.”⁵³ For example, it said,

... we talk of revolution, which will be an armed confrontation and long years of sustained guerrilla warfare inside this country, we must also talk of the type of world we want to live in. We must commit ourselves to a society where the total means of production are taken from the rich and placed into the hands of the state for the welfare of all the people. This is what we mean when we say total control. And we mean that black people who have suffered the most from exploitation and racism must move to protect their black interest by assuming leadership inside of the United States of everything that exists.... Our fight is against racism, capitalism and imperialism, and we are dedicated to building a socialist society inside the United States where the total means of production and distribution are in the hands of the State, and that must be led by black people, by revolutionary blacks who are concerned about the total humanity of this world.⁵⁴

It also said, “We say... think in terms of total control of the United States. Prepare ourselves to seize state power,” and,

We must begin seizing power wherever we are, and we must say to the planners of this conference that you are no longer in charge.... we are going to assume power over the conference.... We maintain we have the revolutionary right to do this.⁵⁵

Many observers have also cited the unconventional, disruptive tactics and aesthetics of Forman and his supporters as another reason for these negative reactions.⁵⁶ As James H. Cone put it of

Forman, “he was Marxist, and his physical appearance and the language he used were not what whites would recognize as an instrument of God.”⁵⁷ Even a usually socially progressive organ of the black press, the Harlem-based *New York Amsterdam News*, wrote that “busting up church services is not our idea of how to gain any demands, no matter how righteous they may be.”⁵⁸

While James Forman’s appearance at the Riverside Church is known as the unveiling of the Manifesto to the white churches and synagogues, Forman had already presented the Manifesto to the Episcopal Church on May 1, and to the NCC on May 2.⁵⁹ While other individuals and groups followed Forman’s May 4 example by disrupting meetings and worship services, most of the presentations of the Manifesto by Forman himself after that date were prearranged.⁶⁰ Despite this fact, church leaders anxiously awaited the arrival of the “violence-prone black revolutionary [who] seemed as unforgettable as Satan himself.”⁶¹ Manifesto backers made demands of the Episcopal Church, the Lutheran Church in America, the American Lutheran Church, the UPCUSA, the UCC, the United Methodist Board of Missions, the American Baptist Convention, the Christian Science Church, the Reformed Church in America, the Unitarian Universalist Association, and several different Roman Catholic leaders.⁶² On May 6, Forman, in the mold of Martin Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses, nailed the Manifesto to the door of the headquarters of the Lutheran Church in America.⁶³ The headquarters of most U.S. Protestant denominations were in New York City in the 1960s, thus allowing Forman to visit many of them in a short period of time.⁶⁴

Early Manifesto Supporters

Black Clergy, Black Women, and the Manifesto

Black clergy, and the NCBC in particular, were the earliest and strongest supporters of the Manifesto. The NCBC - still headed by Metz Rollins, who was still on the payroll of the UPCUSA's Council on Church and Race (COCAR) - publicly endorsed the Manifesto on May 5, the day after the Riverside incident.⁶⁵ On May 7, its board issued a statement in support of this decision - the first official statement of a religious organization in response to the Manifesto - calling on denominational black caucuses to "unify their efforts of advocacy and implementation of the Manifesto through coordination provided by the NCBC," and instructed Rollins to "immediately begin this coordinating activity."⁶⁶ On May 9, Rollins joined James Forman in presenting the Manifesto's demands to the New York Catholic Archdiocese.⁶⁷ When the Archdiocese issued its rejection of these demands on May 21, Rollins characterized this rejection as an "almost absolute affront to the black church."⁶⁸ By the end of that month, the NCBC and NBEDC were closely coordinating with one another, rendering "the line of separation between BEDC and NCBC... practically dissolved."⁶⁹ Rollins was also critical of the Episcopal Church's eventual decision to disburse reparational funds through the NCBC, rather than honor the request of Forman - and of the NCBC itself - to disburse the funds directly to the BEDC, because he thought that decision both showed distrust for Forman and divided black people against one another.⁷⁰

The NCBC's statement on the Manifesto called Forman a "modern-day prophet," and said,

The white churches and synagogues undeniably have been the moral cement of the structure of racism in this nation and the vast majority of them continue to play that role today. They are capable, out of their enormous corporate assets, to make some reparation for their complicity in the exploitation of blacks. In so doing they... will demonstrate to other American institutions the authenticity of their frequently verbalized contrition and of their faith in the justice of God.⁷¹

According to James Findlay, “these last words were like arrows driven straight at the moral sensitivities of national white church leaders, who quickly would read the phrases and have to ponder how to react to them.”⁷²

The NCBC’s support for the Manifesto should have been unsurprising given the organization’s militant backing of Black Power and Black Theology. At that particular moment, the NCBC was enthralled by James Cone’s groundbreaking first book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, published in April of that year. However, since many NCBC members served in majority-white denominations - especially the United Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church (USA) - they were in the awkward position of accusing their own denominations of white supremacy. Their denominational affiliations also meant that, to a greater degree than clergy in historically black denominations, many of them had close relationships with white clergy. Their support for reparations was a bit of a shock for these white associates. For most white people, according to James Cone, “the very idea of reparations for blacks sounded preposterous,” and “then to insist that they give the money to a person with the ‘blasphemous’ behavior of James Forman... sounded even more ridiculous.”⁷³ White Presbyterian ministers for example, may have thought of Wilmore as a friendly and amiable token black member of the Board of Christian Education’s Social Education and Action staff, of the faculty of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, or of the drafting committee for the Confession of 1967 (C67). Perhaps such ministers had

observed his support for Black Power and the NCBC, but thought those activities of little relevance to them. When a provocative, Marxist Black Panther showed up to disrupt their worship services and meetings and demand payment of half a million dollars, the biggest surprise to many of these white clergy was that their black fellow mainline clergy eagerly expressed their agreement with and support for Forman.⁷⁴

As previously mentioned, on June 13, the NCBC's theological commission, now under the leadership of Wilmore's successor and fellow black Presbyterian Preston Williams, met in Atlanta and issued its "Black Theology" statement.⁷⁵ The full NCBC approved the statement as its fifth official statement at its third annual convocation in Oakland, California in November 1969.⁷⁶ This statement was primarily a celebratory response to James Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power*, affirming the tenets of Black Theology along the lines of Cone's book. As previously noted, Cone, newly introduced to the organization, played a major part in writing the statement. However, the statement also served as a response to and further endorsement of the Black Manifesto.⁷⁷ In this respect, it said,

Reparation is a part of the Gospel Message. Zaccheus knew well the necessity for repayment as an essential ingredient in repentance. "If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (Luke 19:8). The church which calls itself the servant church must, like its Lord, be willing to strip itself of possessions in order to build and restore that which has been destroyed by the compromising bureaucrats and conscienceless rich. While reparation cannot remove the guilt created by the despicable deed of slavery, it is, nonetheless, a positive response to the need for power in the black community. This nation, and, a people who have always related the value of the person to his possession of property, must recognize the necessity of restoring property in order to reconstitute personhood.⁷⁸

Preston Williams also wrote an essay to accompany the statement upon its publication in the *Christian Century* in October.⁷⁹ In his essay, Williams criticized modern theology for ignoring

poor and black people, assuming them a “threat to decency and order,” and therefore trying to “control” them.⁸⁰ Instead, theologians should “have the poor and black affirm their being.”⁸¹ He promoted the Black Theology principles of “self-determination,” Jesus as “the Liberator,” and the “liberation of the black man as God’s mighty act,” “at this moment in history.”⁸² Williams also condemned white restraint of the pace of change, criticizing those who

... [tell] the black man to “get back” - get back until Protestants reunite with Rome, until the Vietnam war is over, until your progress does not endanger the status of Irishmen or Jews, until you no longer embarrass the middle-class Negro who has “made it” through the system and now enjoys the adulation of a few whites.⁸³

He said that the gospel “requires all black men to affirm their dignity as persons and all whites to surrender their presumption of superiority and end their abuses of power.”⁸⁴ Instead of trying to control things, whites should simply “let my people go.”⁸⁵

Williams, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and others before him, supported disruption as “creative tension,” and saw the conflict over reparations, as well as the controversial ideologies and tactics associated with the Manifesto, as an opportunity for such tension which might bear fruit.⁸⁶ In theological terms, Williams warned about reparation-less cheap grace, and said that “verbal repentance” is not always sufficient payment for a debt.⁸⁷ He added that the integrationist goal of “abandoning racial intolerance” was not sufficient, rather a Christian should “also seek to repair all the damage done by racial injustice.”⁸⁸

Like the NCBC in its Black Theology Statement, Williams affirmed the words of Eldridge Cleaver, “We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our efforts to gain it,” interpreting the quote as symbolic of “the black man’s determination not to remain passive while white Americans seek to enslave him.”⁸⁹ The use of this quote by Williams

and the NCBC underscored the uncompromising, militant posture of black clergy in the Black Power era. The references to “our manhood” and “the black man” in this quote and elsewhere, as well as the decision to quote from Eldridge Cleaver, in particular, also hinted at gendered aspects of black clergy’s embrace of Black Power. The NCBC and the black denominational caucuses, while a step forward for black men in terms of self-determination, were of mixed value for black women, because such caucuses re-affirmed the authority of clergy, and thus, almost exclusively, of men, to speak on behalf of the black religious community.

A few women are on record in support of the Manifesto. In June 1969 Emma B. Watson, head of the AME Zion Women’s Home and Foreign Missionary Society, wrote to Margaret Shannon, head of the NCC’s Church Women United, and contended that given her sharing in “the many gruesome experiences of the members of my church for approximately forty years,” and in her official capacity “having had intimate conversations and experiences with women in all parts of the Nation, *I know reparations are due.*”⁹⁰

Fannie Lou Hamer, a Baptist sharecropper and Civil Rights leader from Mississippi, is most famous for her work with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which challenged the Democratic Party at its 1964 convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey to seat its integrated delegation rather than Mississippi’s all-white, segregationist delegation. In that episode, Hamer led the charge to defy white liberal leadership, in the form of President Lyndon B. Johnson, on a national stage, to “question America,” and to draw on religious themes by singing “This Little Light of Mine.”⁹¹ In these respects and more, she paralleled James Forman’s actions at the Riverside Church. In fact, Hamer herself was a member of the BEDC steering committee, as proposed in the Manifesto itself.⁹² Yet her voice hardly shows up at all in historical records

regarding the Manifesto. Her absence is probably explained by her gender. As a woman, she was not eligible to be clergy, and therefore would not have been able to transfer the prominent, disruptive role she played in Atlantic City into the sphere of denominational politics in which the Manifesto was discussed, despite her public endorsement of the Manifesto. The Black Power, Black Theology, and NCBC focus on “black manhood” also did not leave much room for Hamer’s leadership.

Hamer was also in the minority among Manifesto supporters in that she was a Southerner. As previously discussed, most NCBC members were non-Southerners. Another prominent Southerner who did support the Manifesto was Baptist minister and SCLC President Ralph David Abernathy. Wilmore had conceived of the NCBC partly to contrast with the southern black Baptist clergy, especially in the SCLC, who had dominated earlier phases of the Civil Rights Movement. On August 13, Abernathy compared the negative reaction to Forman’s appearance at Riverside to that which greeted another “modern-day prophet” at the same church, Martin Luther King, Jr., who had come out against the Vietnam War from Riverside’s pulpit in 1967.⁹³ Abernathy said, “anything that gets white folks so upset must have some good in it.”⁹⁴ Abernathy also added references to Jesus’ casting money changers out of the temple.⁹⁵ In terms of biblical prophets, he said,

Did not the prophets speak out of a similar subversive perspective when they damned Israel for her transgressions? Was not their attack directed at the wealth and meaningless ceremonies of the priests and in the face of the hunger and misery suffered by God’s children?... And was there not even a physical resemblance between Amos, the dusty-road-weary prophet in his desert garb, and Jim Forman in his dashiki? Could it not be that God had raised up from the stones of the city streets a new prophet to cry out with the rocks, “Feed my people”?⁹⁶

Episcopal priests were a significant presence in the NCBC, and many black priests, NCBC members and otherwise, supported the Manifesto. At a September 1969 Episcopal denominational meeting in South Bend, Indiana, black priest and NCBC member Paul Washington, who had worked with activists associated with the BEDC in Philadelphia, joined activist Muhammad Kenyatta to take the microphone out of the hands of the white Presiding Bishop John Hines.⁹⁷ Kenyatta, a Chester, Pennsylvania native who had worked for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, was a member of the BEDC steering committee as proposed in the Manifesto.⁹⁸ Washington spoke for consideration of the Manifesto's demands and against white control of the church's agenda, and then led a walkout of black convention representatives, a tactic which was successful in gaining more serious consideration of the proposal.⁹⁹ When the convention voted to funnel money to the BEDC through a white-controlled committee, thus ensuring white oversight of how the funding was disbursed, another black priest, Junius Carter of Pittsburgh, protested.¹⁰⁰ He charged the convention with the "‘crucifixion’ of its black members," shouting,

You've talked about black brotherhood, but forget it, Joe. You don't mean it.... It's nothing but a damned lie. You don't trust me, you don't trust black priests and you don't trust black people. You keep saying "Be calm, be patient," but the waiting is over.... I'm sick, I'm sick of you.... To hell with love.¹⁰¹

Then, "fighting back tears," Carter stormed out, leaving those present "stunned, moved, and tensely silent."¹⁰² His intervention, like that of Washington, was effective, and caused the convention to reroute the funds through the black-controlled NCBC.¹⁰³

Early White Supporters of the Manifesto

White clergy and church leaders as a whole were much less enthusiastic about the Manifesto and its reparations demands than were their black equivalents. However, some white people did speak out on its behalf, some as early as mid-June 1969. Reformed theologian Ronald Goetz was one of the first white people to do so. Following on the NCBC's May 7 description of Forman as a "modern-day prophet," he described Forman as a "strange prophet" "cast in a prophetic role whether he intends so or not," whose disruptive style was comparable to those of Jeremiah, Amos (quoting, "I hate, I despise your feasts.... let justice roll down like waters...." from Amos 5:21-24), Jesus' cleansing of the temple, and "the Sermon on the Mount and other such arcane utterances from the Nazarene wild man."¹⁰⁴ Later that month, UCC theologian Howard Schomer compared Forman to Amos, and to another biblical prophet and disseminator of revolutionary ideology:

The Black Manifesto is a powerful reminder to many that the gospel of Jesus Christ, like the prophecy of Amos, gives us no reason to expect that social righteousness will always flow in a well channeled stream.... There is a deeply disturbing echo of ancient and revealing words in the ultimate vision, if not the tactics, of this manifesto posted on our door. It recalls Mary as well as Mao and Marx: "He has shown strength with his arm... scattered the proud... put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry... and the rich he has sent empty away."¹⁰⁵

Schomer asked whether white churches, given their support for gradualism over "social revolution," were prepared "even to consider the radical claims of the Magnificat let alone the harsh summons of the Black Manifesto."¹⁰⁶

While white laypeople tended to fervently oppose the Manifesto, the white Episcopal layman, lawyer, and activist William Stringfellow was one of its most articulate advocates. In an essay likely composed in the summer of 1969, Stringfellow said that the Manifesto was the "first

proposal anywhere advanced in the contemporary days of the American racial crisis, which holds promise of being, at once, legally precedented, psychologically realistic, theologically sound, and viable so far as practical implementation is concerned.”¹⁰⁷ He praised the idea of reparations as having “some imagination and some grace,” and “venerable sanction in both biblical faiths.”¹⁰⁸ His ability to see the merits in the proposal stemmed from his insights both as an attorney and as a lay theologian. With regard to the law, Stringfellow pointed out that reparations were neither new nor radical, rather they stood in a long legal tradition and were in fact a “limited remedy,” a “sensible” and “conservative tactic,” distinct from more drastic “punitive damages.”¹⁰⁹ He cited precedents of reparations paid to or considered for American Indians, Japanese Americans, the “victims of Nazism,” and those falsely convicted of crimes.¹¹⁰

Stringfellow opposed paternalistic integrationism and the vesting of funding controls in white hands, and appreciated that reparations might put a stop to that practice.¹¹¹ He hoped that reparations would defy paternalism by breaking up the preexisting narrative in which benevolent white people assist the social progress of black people.¹¹² Instead reparations would force white people to acknowledge the damage they and their institutions had caused.¹¹³

In terms of theology, Stringfellow said that reparations were “a means of validating repentance.”¹¹⁴ Since the churches preach repentance, and that “repentance requires ‘restitution and satisfaction,’” where better than the church to raise demands for such restitution?¹¹⁵

Stringfellow also provided biblical support for the idea of corporate guilt, beginning with original sin and ending with the crucifixion, suggesting that corporate guilt underscores the interrelation of all people.¹¹⁶ He also suggested that reparations were an opportunity for the

church to reduce its establishment status and image, which has become a liability in appealing to young people, by giving away some of its wealth.¹¹⁷

Manifesto Opponents

Manifesto opponents were a diverse set, including clergy and laypeople, women and men, black and white. Responses to the Manifesto from white male clergy varied widely, and reflected the inner turmoil of these individuals who felt caught in the middle between immediatist activists and conservative white lay-constituencies, and were uncomfortable relinquishing their power to black people, laypeople, or women. This was true of Episcopal Presiding Bishop John Hines - whose microphone had been appropriated by Paul Washington and Muhammad Kenyatta at the September denominational meeting in South Bend. Hines rejected the principle of reparations on the theological grounds that Jesus Christ had already paid for human sin.¹¹⁸ He was somewhat receptive to the Manifesto, but did not waver from a typical stance for the white establishment, a triumphalistic, forward-looking embrace of existing channels for social action, saying “there is no doubt in my mind that this Church is moving in the right direction... our mandate is for full speed ahead - united... in the name of Jesus Christ!”¹¹⁹

Many clergy objected to the radical ideology of the Manifesto and its openness to the use of violence. Among Episcopal priests, Robert Webb thought the Manifesto “filled with hatred and bitterness, ... tinged with philosophies alien to the American ideal,” and Robert L. Howell criticized its sponsors for not “repudiating talk of violent revolution.”¹²⁰ Webb promised that his church members would withhold their contributions to the denomination as a result.¹²¹

Other Episcopal leaders were conflicted about the merits of the Manifesto, and especially concerned about how any support for reparations would play in the pews. When Forman delivered the Manifesto to national Episcopal Church headquarters, Bishops Stephen Bayne and J. Brooke Mosley greeted him with a mixture of shock, politeness, and agreement with his condemnation of white racism and support for black empowerment.¹²² But most of all, they were concerned about lay Episcopalians' lack of receptiveness to further involvement in racial or social issues.¹²³ Bayne thought his denomination not a powerful "establishment," but a "tiny, powerless agency," vulnerable to the demands of its membership, especially given the risk of conservative white members protesting by withholding regular church contributions.¹²⁴

A major divide between pulpit and pew is indeed apparent in responses to the Manifesto. The responses of non-clergy men were largely opposed to the Manifesto, despite exceptions like William Stringfellow. Those responses reflected the conservative and moderate white male laymen who could not understand the denomination's funding priorities in its seeming support for black radicals, and the fact that the black clergy who made up the NCBC and related organizations had become radicalized, a development which had not extended to laypeople as well. Conservative white Protestants, both clergy and laity, also opposed the Manifesto, a development which, along with the pulpit-pew divide, presaged the renewal of fundamentalist criticism of mainline denominations for their liberal theology and their interest in social reform. The editors of *Christianity Today* called James Forman "a key formulator of the new anti-church revolution" who had "invaded" Riverside and promoted "blackmail or extortion."¹²⁵ Some white evangelicals took pleasure at the fact that Forman had focused most of his attention on mainline institutions, portraying the Manifesto as the predictable result of these institutions' liberalism.¹²⁶

These conservative Protestant individuals and groups were among the forerunners of a theologically and politically conservative Protestantism which would gain strength and public attention during the 1970s, even as mainline denominations declined in terms of membership and financial resources. The Manifesto crisis brought several of these precursors to the New Christian Right into the spotlight. One such organization among Episcopalians was the Texas-based Foundation for Christian Theology, organized in 1966 by priest Paul Kratzig.¹²⁷ This organization sought “to define and counteract the influence of Humanism as a substitute for Christian beliefs,” and to present “a Christian challenge to those who presume to... involve the Church in the social, political, and economic activities of our times.”¹²⁸ Kratzig charged that his denomination had neglected missionary programs in favor of support for Black Power groups, and criticized what in his view was a hierarchical denominational leadership style as taking the church “back to medieval times when the hearts and minds of the people were controlled” by church leaders.¹²⁹ Kratzig’s organization claimed to speak for a “silent majority” of laypeople, and received support from U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater.¹³⁰

While Kratzig’s organization was likely overstating the breadth of his particular organization’s support among laypeople, Bishop Stephen Bayne’s concerns about the laity’s wariness about further racial and social action were well founded. Gallup polling revealed that after Forman’s appearance at Riverside, ninety-two percent of American churchgoers opposed church payment of reparations.¹³¹ Many laymen opposing the Manifesto expressed frustration with white male leadership for allowing something like reparations to even become a topic for discussion. Historian Gardiner Shattuck suggests that after the Episcopal Church approved a grant to the NCBC to support the goals of the Manifesto, “many middle-class white Americans

now began to wonder whether the Episcopal Church had lost its corporate mind.”¹³² Episcopalian Perry Laukhuff of Connecticut wrote to his leadership, underscoring the role of gender and masculinity in these dynamics, saying, “to see grown men groveling is nauseating.... This is the kind of behavior which long ago took away from me any respect for the national leadership of the Church.”¹³³ Withheld contributions led to major cuts in the 1969 Episcopal Church budget.¹³⁴ Vestry members from several Southern churches challenged John Hines, asking why they should contribute to the church when the church would then turn those funds over to black militants.¹³⁵ Episcopal leadership was not aided by the *New York Times*’ characterization of the Episcopal contribution to the NCBC as “reparations,” despite denominational leaders’ protest that they had not approved the principle of reparations.¹³⁶

In some cases, lay opposition extended beyond white people and conservatives. Charles V. Willie, a black Episcopal layman, Syracuse sociology professor, former classmate of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s at Morehouse, and member both of the denominational Executive Council and of a key committee tasked with addressing racial issues, opposed the Manifesto.¹³⁷ Willie supported social action, Civil Rights, and integrationism, but not Black Power, because he saw the latter as sociologically harmful to black people and divisive, therefore contrary to the church’s mission of reconciliation.¹³⁸ Willie carefully sought to separate out the good and the bad in the Manifesto, calling it “the prophetic and the preposterous all balled and bound up together.”¹³⁹ He agreed with the Manifesto’s diagnoses of the persistence of white racism and oppression of black people, and that the religious establishment had been complicit in such oppression, and had a responsibility to respond to any injustice in society.¹⁴⁰ He also called people to listen to Forman, given the “strange and unusual ways” God speaks to people.¹⁴¹ He

appreciated how the Manifesto was able to mitigate denominational pride for its generosity to the poor, and hoped it might stimulate his denomination to do more.¹⁴²

However, Willie recoiled at the idea of reparations itself, that “blacks can be bought for money,” connecting that idea to “neoslavery,” “prostitution,” and “blackmail,” and saying that one cannot “buy one’s way out of sin,” in order to “feel good for a moment about past sins.”¹⁴³ He portrayed reparations as the enemy of integration, associating the former with paying black people to stay “outside of the mainstream.”¹⁴⁴ He said that the idea of reparations was more of a political than religious question, and criticized the Manifesto’s openness to violent means, as well as the idea that James Forman was an appropriate spokesperson for black people.¹⁴⁵ He even argued that Manifesto’s demands were really “an awkward cry from blacks to be included,” rather than, as its backers claimed, a call for Black Power, justice, and self-determination.¹⁴⁶ While a layperson, Willie paralleled black clergy in that he was also male, highly educated, and involved in denominational leadership. His significance as a counterexample to black clergy may not therefore be so much that he was representative of the views of black laymen or laypersons in general, but rather that he clarified the fact that black mainline Protestants were not monolithic relative to the Black Manifesto or Black Power. His contrast to black clergy underscored the radicalization of the latter. It also affirmed the fact that, as previously discussed, black Christian supporters of Black Power like Gayraud Wilmore, James Cone, and Albert Cleage were speaking out of a position of weakness, amid both black youth’s discontentment with the church, and the black church’s discomfort with radicalism. Willie was one example of the varieties of lived black religion which did not easily fit into radical black clergy’s conceptions of Black Theology or black religious history.

There were also several other prominent black laymen and clergy who opposed the Manifesto, including Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins, longtime Martin Luther King, Jr. critic and President of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., Joseph H. Jackson, and even NCBC member, AME Zion Bishop, and chairman of the NAACP board of directors Stephen Spottswood.¹⁴⁷ Rustin described Forman as “hustling” or “begging,” and said, “the idea of reparations is a ridiculous idea. If my great-grandfather picked cotton for 50 years, then he may deserve some money, but he’s dead and gone and nobody owes me anything.”¹⁴⁸ Jackson compared the Black Manifesto to the Communist Manifesto, called the former a “message for the destruction of the United States,” and threatened to withdraw his denomination from the NCC if the latter proved responsive to the Manifesto.¹⁴⁹ Spottswood called reparations “easy and emotionally appealing, but not the fairest way for the white generation to redress the wrongs still visited upon this black generation and its children.”¹⁵⁰

Women, almost all of whom were laypeople at this point, were not as supportive of the Manifesto as most black clergy, nor as opposed to it as most white laymen. Like many white male clergy, they had mixed reactions to the Manifesto, though often for very different reasons than those of men. Among those who supported the Manifesto were eight white Episcopal women who took over the Detroit office of Bishop Robert Emrich to force him to negotiate with the BEDC.¹⁵¹ On the other hand, some conservative Episcopal women were resistant to the racially liberal funding priorities and sexism of male denominational leaders. Denominational leaders drew from Episcopal women’s United Thank Offering to fund racial empowerment programs in 1967.¹⁵² Conservative women objected to such funding, in that disenfranchised women (who were excluded from ordination or service as General Convention deputies) who

made up the majority and most active segment of the church were giving money to a program directed by black men.¹⁵³ Dorothy Faber of Paul Kratzig's Foundation for Christian Theology objected the church's use of the women-raised funds to support "bloody revolution," so she created the alternative "Christian Thank Offering" over which "faithful Christian women" would exercise control.¹⁵⁴ Conservative women's actions to secure their own self-determining control over financial resources directly imitated similar efforts by black male clergy. Dorothy Faber therefore was a right-wing leader opposed to Black Power and black nationalism, who nevertheless found something worth imitating in the tactics of radical black leaders.

While tensions between conservative church women and Black Power advocates was unsurprising, prominent liberal church women also expressed reservations about the Manifesto. As a part of a 1968 denominational reorganization to emphasize black empowerment, the Episcopal Church eliminated the "General Division of Women's Work," a change which had the effect of reducing women's leadership roles.¹⁵⁵ Cynthia Wedel, an Episcopalian and former leader of the NCC's United Church Women, objected to the church's putting too much emphasis on social action. Without necessarily opposing black empowerment, she also classified such efforts as "a prime example of 'pressure... imposed from above' by 'a new breed of clergymen... insensitive to the average man and woman in the pew,'" contrasting these "marching ministers" to the unsung faithful service of "women in the rank-and-file church membership."¹⁵⁶ She objected to male ministers' characterization of her as "condoning the status quo or 'giving in' to the forces of reaction," but she did want the church to take a step back from social action.¹⁵⁷

While black women like Emma B. Watson and Fannie Lou Hamer supported the Manifesto, other black women were less sanguine about it. Coretta Scott King reportedly "found

some merit in reparations but preferred massive church pressure on the government to worship disruptions.”¹⁵⁸ Some cited their ambivalence about Black Power as leading them to ambivalence about the Manifesto. This was the case for longtime Civil Rights leader and future first black female Episcopal priest, Pauli Murray. Murray was always resistant to a racial analysis of society which neglected gender analysis. Murray was “troubled” by early Black Power and black nationalism, and by the Black Manifesto.¹⁵⁹ According to Anthony Pinn, Murray thought “such efforts damaged the integrity of the human being, reduced human dignity, and attacked the sense of unity or inclusiveness that marked the best of the Christian tradition and the best practice of social protest.”¹⁶⁰ She criticized the Manifesto, arguing that its demands conflicted with her firm theological belief in relationships.¹⁶¹ She even resisted the creation of a black caucus to address the Manifesto, saying that “as the victim of three hundred fifty years of separatism and exclusiveness, Negro Christians (and other nonwhite ethnic Christians should be the last to foster separatism) [sic].”¹⁶² Murray said that she could only support such a caucus if it also took on “a platform urging the ordination of women, dropping all barriers to women serving as members of the Vestry in all Episcopal churches, as lay readers, crucifers, acolytes, deacons, and priests.”¹⁶³

Presbyterians and the Manifesto

No majority-white denomination or institution fully acceded to Forman’s demands. Most such groups either ignored the Manifesto, immediately rejected it, or responded by pointing out the ways in which they already contributed to anti-poverty and anti-racism efforts, perhaps even slightly increasing those existing contributions. A few groups did, however, respond by making significant new contributions to economic development in black and/or poor communities, to be

overseen by such people themselves. No group was willing to refer to any such contributions as “reparations,” but, despite continued paternalism and other problems with these efforts, they were, in fact, reparations payments. The United Presbyterian Church and the Episcopal Church (ECUSA) provided the most substantial financial and theological responses to the reparations demands, although even those contributions fell well short of the demands themselves. While Gayraud Wilmore was an important player in the NCBC and NCC responses to the Manifesto, he was by far the most important figure in the UPCUSA’s response.

Wilmore and Forman

Gayraud Wilmore and James Forman had known each other for a long time. Forman had been involved in the Birmingham Campaign, the March on Washington, the Selma-to-Montgomery march, and, most importantly, Mississippi Freedom Summer.¹⁶⁴ Wilmore and Forman had met in Hattiesburg in 1964, as their organizations, CORAR and SNCC, worked closely together in that city and on other projects in Mississippi.¹⁶⁵ These groups’ regional headquarters were across the street from each other in Hattiesburg.¹⁶⁶ As previously noted, Oscar McCloud remembered socializing and smoking together with Wilmore and Forman in the Mississippi days.¹⁶⁷ In a May 11, 1969 sermon, Wilmore vouched for Forman based on their history together, saying, “I have walked picket lines with him and labored with him in the dangerous backwoods of Mississippi; I trust his sincerity and his courage....”¹⁶⁸

This preexisting relationship not only meant that Wilmore was willing to vouch for Forman, but according to Amy Miracle, it may also help explain why Forman primarily brought his demands to churches, rather than to the federal government or other entities. Having

collaborated with church people in past racial justice work, he “recognized their commitment.”¹⁶⁹ She says, “the Black Manifesto was both an indictment and a challenge to the churches because Forman believed that the churches were capable of regeneration.”¹⁷⁰ Wilmore himself agreed that, as paraphrased by Miracle, “Forman addressed the churches because of his knowledge of the commitment and sincerity of church people.”¹⁷¹ In fact, the two men’s relationship was such that, according to Wilmore, on the April 26 date on which Forman presented the Manifesto to the NBEDC, Forman “had come to me that morning to share its contents and ask my opinion about what he planned to do.”¹⁷² Apparently, Wilmore himself was in attendance at the original NBEDC conference in Detroit. Wilmore later described this encounter in more detail.

...when we got to Wayne State University, the thing that I remember more than anything else was that Forman came to me with the Manifesto, and talked to me about it and said this was what he was going to do, the next day. I asked him if he had talked with other clergy, and he had, but I don’t remember who else he talked to. I don’t think I saw a document, I just talked to him about it. And I was not aware of the full implications of what he was talking about, I said, “Yeah, why don’t you do it,” you know, that kind of thing. My attitude was that this might be something that would be worthwhile.¹⁷³

The two men were close enough that Forman felt he needed Wilmore’s feedback and/or approval. Wilmore, however, despite his important work in the subsequent months to defend Forman and the Manifesto, did not quite realize “the full implications” of what they were getting themselves into. Wilmore later raised his own questions about the process Forman used to secure NBEDC approval for the Manifesto.

I didn’t realize that he was going to steamroll this thing through IFCO, and that there would be a real confrontation with the people who were representing various organizations across the country, as you recall there was a confrontation, and in a sense Jim Forman took over that [NBEDC] meeting.... He took over the meeting, and may have falsified the vote, there could have been some manipulation there, but in any case the Manifesto was reluctantly adopted by the [NBEDC], and we came away from Detroit realizing that we had a whole new ball game on our hands. In a sense from that point on

we were carried along by the momentum of events rather than deciding what the events would be ourselves.¹⁷⁴

When later asked whether at the time he had “any idea as to what was going to happen the next... two or three months,” Wilmore responded,

No, I was not aware of what was going to happen in terms of the confrontation at Riverside Church which happened just a few days later.... So from April to December, all hell broke loose, and I don't think any of us, I don't think Forman himself anticipated how that thing was to skyrocket coming out of the April meeting of [the NBEDC]. But as I said, many of us were caught up in the momentum of the thing at that point, and we recognized the churches were guilty, no question about that.¹⁷⁵

Wilmore has noted several other individuals who may have contributed to the Manifesto's formulation, but he has never himself claimed to have made any contribution himself, beyond merely encouraging Forman to go ahead with his proposal to the NBEDC.¹⁷⁶

Wilmore's Early Support for the Manifesto

As previously discussed, J. Metz Rollins and Preston Williams, both black Presbyterian ministers, NCBC officials, and close Wilmore associates, were central to NCBC support for the Manifesto, in Rollins' case beginning on the day after Forman's appearance at Riverside.

Wilmore, too, was one of the first public supporters of the Manifesto. On May 11, the Sunday after the Riverside incident, Wilmore spoke at the predominantly black Germantown Community United Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, praising Forman and calling his demand for \$500 million “a modest sum.”¹⁷⁷ As paraphrased by the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, Wilmore said that Forman “was being used by God to test the churches.”¹⁷⁸ In a different account of the same sermon, as already noted above, Wilmore was quoted as saying,

I do believe that James Forman is a prophet for our times. I have walked picket lines with him and labored with him in the dangerous backwoods of Mississippi; I trust his sincerity and his courage, and, most of all, I believe that he is mostly right and that the church is mostly wrong.... It may well be that for all his vehemence and rude behavior, God is using James Forman....¹⁷⁹

Wilmore also argued that “the white church is today deeply entrenched in the system of white oppression,” noting that “many of the laymen who sit on the governing boards of wealthy white congregations are the absentee owners and managers of the corporate and political structures which have kept black people powerless.”¹⁸⁰ He pointed out that “fine suburban congregations” included white homeowners unwilling to sell to African Americans.¹⁸¹ He added that “of all the institutions in the private sector, the churches, especially the local white congregations, have done the least to make jobs and income available to the masses of black people.”¹⁸²

The “Liberation” of the Interchurch Center and Forman’s Invitation to Address the United Presbyterian General Assembly

On May 14, some of James Forman’s supporters - black Presbyterians, according to Robert Lecky and Elliott Wright, conveying demands on behalf of “blacks and Spanish-Americans” - “liberated” church offices on the eleventh floor of the Interchurch Center at 475 Riverside Drive, including the offices of the Board of National Missions (BNM) under Kenneth G. Neigh, an occupation or “sit-in” which included Gayraud Wilmore’s own office.¹⁸³ According to Bryant George, Forman himself occupied Kenneth Neigh’s office, while others occupied Wilmore’s office.¹⁸⁴ A memorandum issued by these activists identified them as “The Ad Hoc Committee for Justice from the Presbyterian Church,” and their address as “11th Floor - Liberated Territory.”¹⁸⁵ The occupation lasted for eight days - the week during which the

denomination's annual General Assembly was taking place in San Antonio.¹⁸⁶ According to Wilmore, "COCAR viewed the tactic as a prophetic demonstration against white Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish complicity in slavery and the continuing oppression of masses of non-whites at home and abroad. No one thought of calling the police," as had occurred in other such pro-Manifesto occupations.¹⁸⁷

Wilmore, Neigh, and George were not at the Interchurch Center on the day the occupation began. They were all in San Antonio, where G.A. had begun that same day.¹⁸⁸ These men were scheduled to participate that evening in a meeting of the Assembly's General Council in order to decide whether to invite Forman to speak at the Assembly.¹⁸⁹ Wilmore, Neigh, George, and Edler G. Hawkins all arrived late to the meeting, and a few minutes later the meeting was interrupted by a phone call to Neigh from his Interchurch Center office to report the beginning of its occupation.¹⁹⁰ According to Neigh, some on the Council suspected he and Wilmore of having secretly organized the occupation.¹⁹¹ Amy Miracle describes the meeting itself:

After extensive discussion, the Council agreed to invite Forman and to pay his expenses, a courtesy extended to all invited guests of the Assembly. Would Forman have been invited to speak if the occupation of the offices had not been initiated? Forman himself stated in a press conference several days later that he was invited because of the take-over.... The General Council may have believed that Forman or one of his supporters would demand an audience with the Assembly regardless of the wishes of the Council. Kenneth Neigh remembers that many members of the Council were motivated by fear of Forman and what he represented. If James Forman spoke by invitation, the Council could influence the content and timing of the presentation.¹⁹²

Perhaps referring to efforts in this meeting by himself, COCAR chairman Hawkins, and closely-related BNM staffers Neigh and George, Wilmore later said that "COCAR got Forman invited"

to address the Assembly.¹⁹³ Of the General Council's mixed feelings about Forman in that moment, Wilmore recalled,

... one of the reasons it had some difficulty responding was that while these discussions were going on, the offices of the United Presbyterian Church were being occupied back at 475 Riverside Drive. And the National Council of Churches at that point was debating whether to have an injunction against the people who were occupying the offices and so forth, in other words, I think there was some... coercion, there was a back against the wall kind of a situation there that made it very difficult for people to concede anything without feeling that... they were doing it at the point of a gun.¹⁹⁴

Forman and his Latinx and Black Presbyterian Allies Before the Assembly

The next day, May 15, James Forman addressed the Assembly.¹⁹⁵ White Presbyterian minister and professor Jack L. Stotts, who later served as President of both McCormick Theological Seminary and Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, recalled that everyone was “buzzing” about Forman's prospective appearance.¹⁹⁶ According to Amy Miracle, Forman was reportedly treated with respect at the Assembly, albeit “received much more warmly by black Presbyterians than white Presbyterians.”¹⁹⁷ However, while the entire General Council ordinarily sat on the platform behind speakers at the Assembly, only Kenneth Neigh and secretary of the General Council Theophilus Taylor did so during Forman's speech.¹⁹⁸ Yet many black Presbyterians did sit on the platform.¹⁹⁹ Bryant George reported a more hostile reception to Forman. He wrote,

The Assembly was up in arms. It was being picketed daily by right-wingers (renegade followers of the schismatic revivalist, Rev. Carl McIntyre [sic]) and was threatened with more sit-ins by left-wingers. People were asking each other, “What is this world coming to? What is this *church* coming to?” It was reported that some of the commissioners talked about buying baseball bats (commonly known as “toothpicks”), in case there was a sit-in at the General Assembly itself. Some were said to have asked for “toothpicks” so they could take care of the situation themselves. The Presbyterian Church was literally

about to tear itself apart. Some of the Commissioners probably thought and others said openly that “these niggers are attacking the most sacred of all our American icons: private property!”²⁰⁰

Forman’s speech was presented alongside those of several activists of color, most of them Presbyterian: Eliezer Risco, Obed Lopez, Metz Rollins, Gayraud Wilmore, and Edler Hawkins. Risco and Lopez, representatives of the Latin American Defense Organization and La Raza, respectively, presented similar reparational demands on behalf of Latinx Americans.²⁰¹ In a different speech at the Assembly, Jorge Lara-Braud, a Mexican American Presbyterian minister and theologian who was also a supporter of the Manifesto and of the demands of Risco and Lopez, said that Hispanic-Americans were pleased with the attention brought to these issues by the Manifesto, and that the incident proved that “unless a minority mounts a vigorous campaign of open resistance against legal, institutionalized violence, it will continue to endure the nightmare of the wretched.”²⁰² Metz Rollins, of both the COCAR and NCBC staffs, spoke next. He said, “despite good intentions of [the] past, now it is too late to talk about moderation, understanding, gradualism.”²⁰³ Gayraud Wilmore then affirmed Forman as a representative of black people, and connected him with a “new movement which has taken the place of the civil rights movement in this country, which represents the militant black poor in this country and every other black person who is concerned about freedom and justice in American society.”²⁰⁴ Forman spoke next, and was then followed by Edler Hawkins - the highly respected Presbyterian elder statesman and former moderator of the denomination.²⁰⁵

According to Amy Miracle, Forman’s speech was “more moderate” than the Manifesto, though it still charged the denomination with complicity in white supremacy.²⁰⁶ He made demands of denominational support for the Manifesto, support for the demands of Latinx

Americans, divestment from South Africa, and the handing over to the NBEDC of \$80 million in reparations, sixty percent of the denomination's annual income, and denomination-owned land in the South.²⁰⁷ He challenged the Assembly not to shrink from its own ideals.

Where is your power as a General Assembly? If in fact you are concerned, if in fact you are interested in eliminating racism, then we should not leave here until there are some answers to the demands made by Spanish speaking and black people of this country.²⁰⁸

Curiously, Forman did not present the Manifesto, nor did he demonstrate any hostility toward those gathered. Miracle suggests,

Perhaps because he had the attention of the UPCUSA, indeed the invitation of the Assembly, harsh language and tactics were no longer needed. Perhaps the strong support of black Presbyterians and the pleasant reception given to him by the Assembly prompted Forman to adopt a friendlier tone.²⁰⁹

Jack Stotts reflected on the presentation by saying that the church "was being asked to learn new ways of hearing and new ways of responding to its Lord and to the world."²¹⁰ Stotts noted that after Forman's presentation, "delegates applauded the spokesman warmly and sympathetically, but seemed perplexed about the appropriateness of this representation, about what could be done to respond more adequately to genuine needs, and about what folks back home would think."²¹¹

Forman's demands "sounded a note that would echo through the commissioners' individual and collective minds long after the Assembly ended."²¹² Stotts also favorably quoted a committee report in support of a fair hearing for Forman which said,

As in Biblical times, God spoke to his people through strange prophets so we deem it appropriate to have invited to our Assembly spokesmen from the brown and black minorities that through voices such as theirs, however angry the tone, we might better appreciate the depth of their plight. We do not agree with all their methods, ideas, and programs. Our concern is to hear through their pleas the call of Christ, and where possible, to identify with them in their hope and to work with them toward a more human future for all men. We do this not from fear but from love. To do less is to reject our Lord.²¹³



Figure 17. Speakers in support of the Black Manifesto, Black Power, and Brown Power at the 1969 UPCUSA General Assembly, San Antonio, Texas. Obed Lopez (Latin American Defense Organization), Eliezer Risco (La Raza), James Forman, Gayraud Wilmore, J. Metz Rollins, Willis C. Taylor (BPU), Frank H. Heinze (Presbyterian Office of Information).

“Black Manifesto Leadership at 181st General Assembly, 1969,” from “Challenge and response,” *Presbyterian Life*, June 15, 1969, p. 8, MI P97, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Stotts rejoiced that in listening to such “strange prophets” and taking preliminary steps to address their concerns, the Assembly thereby “chose to step boldly toward a new day in Christ,” for “cultural pluralism, not polarization - not knowing fully all that that meant, but stepping into a future with faith and hope.”²¹⁴ Stotts’ reflections revealed a clergyman proud of his “bold” church, wary of the Manifesto’s ideology and its proponents’ tactics, caught in between concerns about both conservative lay-reactions and the demands of justice, and perplexed about the whole situation.

Outrage, Insults, Threats, and Guns in San Antonio

Not every Presbyterian was as enthusiastic about Forman’s presence as were Lara-Braud, Rollins, Wilmore, Hawkins, or Stotts. One “white liberal” commissioner from New Jersey rejected Forman’s claims, saying,

And brothers - I thought were my brothers - do they see in me a white racist, and do I see a revolutionary who wants to tear this country down? ... We need to make it crystal clear that we are not accepting mass guilt for what was done in the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries.²¹⁵

Kenneth Galbreath, a minister from Pittsburgh who had participated in the Selma-to-Montgomery march, later described Forman as “bombastic,” “crude,” “a jerk,” and “hate motivated.”²¹⁶ An elder commissioner from Indiana perceived the mood of the Assembly after Forman’s speech entirely differently from how Stotts described it.

I would say that almost all the commissioners, both clergy and elders, were shocked at the extent of the demands made and the abrasive, brutal way they were proposed. I would also say that had a vote been take [sic] of the commissioners immediately following the outlining of the demands, it is possible that a majority would have voted to reject each and every one of them.²¹⁷

An elder commissioner from Texas said,

Personally, I never heard more racist presentations than I heard to this Assembly the other day... I thought if we could have the kingpin of the Klu [sic] Klux Klan and Adolf Hitler there, we could have all of the bigots that could possibly speak to the Assembly at the same time.²¹⁸

Orly Mason, a businessman, elder, and member of the General Council from Chillicothe, Ohio, had dissented from the Council's decision to invite Forman, and, unhappy at being overruled, he "reportedly made a violent threat to Dr. Wilmore."²¹⁹

At that moment, however, Orly Mason was the least of Gayraud Wilmore's concerns. One thing that neither Stotts, Mason, nor almost anyone else at the Assembly knew was that things might well have become far more dangerous and violent for everyone involved - worse even than commissioners brandishing "toothpicks" at demonstrators - were it not for Wilmore's own careful intervention amidst a delicate situation. During the Assembly, Wilmore's San Antonio hotel suite was "occupied" by young, gun-toting black radicals - "urban guerrillas" - sympathetic to Forman, though probably not under Forman's control.²²⁰

Where they got those guns I don't know, because guns were under my bed, packed down in creolin or whatever that stuff you pack down new weapons in. And they opened it up and showed me....²²¹

Wilmore added,

And as I think about that now, you know, I can go into a cold sweat. Because those people were talking about going up into the balcony and putting the guns, training the guns on the General Assembly. And I had two, three long conversations with them, over a period of about two or three days, in which I tried to talk them out of doing anything preposterous, ridiculous in that situation.²²²

Fortunately, Wilmore was able to successfully talk them out of demanding reparations at gunpoint.²²³

The Assembly's Response to the Manifesto

Per Assembly rules, the activists' demands were referred first, on May 16, to the General Council.²²⁴ The Council decided to exclude all staff members, including those of COCAR, from participating in their deliberations, and Council member Kenneth Neigh was also not present because of the death of a friend.²²⁵ These two circumstances meant that African Americans had much less support than usual in such deliberations.²²⁶ Orly Mason asked that the Council make no response whatsoever, and instead apologize to the Assembly for allowing Forman speaking time.²²⁷ When he realized that he was in the minority, Mason left the meeting, threatening to resign his position and leave the denomination, though he did not follow through with his threat.²²⁸ Instead, he was soon appointed chair of another influential church committee.²²⁹ On May 17, the Council communicated to the Assembly its proposal for how to respond, stating, among other things, that the denomination must respond "in obedience to Christ and not in response to demands outside the church or alienation within."²³⁰ According to Amy Miracle,

In the floor debate that ensued, a heated discussion arose concerning the value of the proposed document. One commissioner, Dr. Docherty of Washington, D.C., called the statement a "timid document." He urged the assembly to respond not to James Forman but to the crisis at hand. "We have been challenged as a Church to be just. This document doesn't do it." Several other commissioners echoed the sentiments of Dr. Docherty. After about an hour of debate a vote was taken and the document was given back to the General Council but with a committee of 15 commissioners to aid in the rewriting.²³¹

Later in the Assembly, the Council returned with a statement expressing more openness to Forman's demands.²³² Then, on May 19, at COCAR's urging, the Assembly itself voted to take several concrete steps toward racial justice.²³³ These included inquiring into the possible transfer of denomination-owned land in the South to impoverished people, providing grants to sharecroppers that they might purchase land, paying \$100,000 to IFCO "to be released when

IFCO has approved the manner in which the money is to be held,” continuing support for IFCO and, therefore, for the NBEDC, and seeking to raise another \$50 million “to be used in depressed areas and among depressed people.”²³⁴ The denomination also spent \$50,000 in “cooperation with the Spanish-Americans,” and would later approve another \$100,000 in aid to American Indians.²³⁵ The Assembly did, however, decline to meet Forman’s demands that it directly fund the NBEDC or otherwise assist in implementing the Manifesto.²³⁶ The denomination’s Stated Clerk at the time, William P. Thompson, and Gayraud Wilmore both felt that while commissioners did not appreciate Forman’s tactics, they agreed with his basic indictment of the church’s complicity in racism, and saw this moment as, according to Wilmore, “a chance for a dramatic break in the pattern of social action.”²³⁷ The denomination’s final statement said,

Our black and brown brothers have something against us. We are grateful that they have come to the Church to tell us about it. We are shocked but chastened, and still uncertain about the way they have come. For generations they stood silently waiting for us to read their situation and respond to it. Later they came as supplicants. They came in quiet reasonableness. They came in anguished patience. They came in frustration and sometimes in repressed anger. WE never rose above our racial perspective far enough to disengage the Church from our own interest and from our white mentality. It was always *our* Church. Now our brothers have come to us in a new way, to shake us, to challenge our basic attitudes; to jar us loose from our arrogance - even in part by their arrogance; to demand substantive, symbolic deeds not words.²³⁸

This statement acknowledged that the demonstrators’ methods were as shocking, if not more so, than the demands themselves, but it also carefully explained why such methods were necessary, given that the gentler language of past racial justice activists had not been sufficient to convince the church to make substantive changes. This passage also walked an interesting line in terms of the extent to which it portrayed people of color as a part of Presbyterianism. On one hand, it referred to the demonstrators as “our black and brown brothers” - connoting intimacy if also,

perhaps, paternalism. On the other hand, despite ostensibly serving as the statement of the entire denomination, this passage reads as a statement of *white* Presbyterians, to which “we” and “our” refer, leaving “our brothers” as “they,” perhaps implying the essential whiteness of Presbyterianism. However, the statement was also self-critical, and continued in such a manner, directly addressing the issue of paternalism:

We who always want to be in the position of telling others, are instead being told. We who want to be well thought of because we do good things for others, are being deprived of that possibility, no matter how well we act.²³⁹

This had been the pattern for white Protestants until the early 1960s - seeking social justice, but always maintaining white male control of the process. In noting their desire “to be well thought of” because of their actions, the speakers also implicitly pointed out the selfishness behind such paternalism. The statement closed by saying,

Their coming to us has made us uncomfortable, but we believe it has been good for us. There is sharpness in it. There is some humiliation in it for us. But we believe it may bring us to our senses in a new way. It may move us further into the anguish of the struggle for freedom from our racism. It is in some strange way a loving approach to us which honors the Church and may help to purify it. Therefore in penitence, some uncertainty, and gratitude, we accept this new way of speaking to us, to affirm that it may be a necessary mode of God’s coming to judge and to help to free us from racial attitudes that demean us.²⁴⁰

These closing sentences acknowledged how painful it was for white Presbyterians to hear the truths spoken by people of color, Presbyterian and otherwise. But they also sought to portray this pain in a positive light, as a kind of “tough love,” and even as a welcome aid in white Presbyterians’ confession of and repentance from sin. This passage, especially the closing line about God’s judgment, also paralleled others’ portrayals of Forman as a biblical prophet, which will receive further attention later in this chapter.

However, the reaction from everyday Presbyterians to this “prophet” was largely negative.²⁴¹ This was not unusual - for a variety of reasons, Assembly commissioners have often been observed to be more liberal, especially during Assemblies themselves, than Presbyterian members as a whole.²⁴² One of these reasons, as noted by Wilmore, was the interventions made by denominational staff. As Amy Miracle put it, “it was the national staff who invited Forman, who influenced the timing of the agenda, who chose a list of articulate, well-respected speakers to speak on his behalf.”²⁴³ According to William P. Thompson, staff and other leadership were overwhelmingly supportive of inviting Forman.²⁴⁴ The otherwise liberal white minister John Fry was quite critical of the staff’s interventions, saying, “it was simply understood that the radicals on the staff had engineered the whole appearance of Forman.”²⁴⁵ Kenneth Galbreath similarly accused the staff of manipulating the Assembly process.²⁴⁶

Some BEDC members were unimpressed with the United Presbyterians’ response. They took exception to the church’s refusal to directly fund the BEDC, responding by again occupying denominational offices and other facilities.²⁴⁷ However, others rated the response more highly. One reportedly said that United Presbyterians “seem to be the most progressive denomination in their response.”²⁴⁸ James Forman himself became friends with Kenneth Neigh afterward, and later expressed his appreciation for the UPCUSA’s response, saying to Neigh, “the church, and the United Presbyterian Church in particular, is our only hope.”²⁴⁹

The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto: Wilmore's Defense of Forman's Demands for Reparations

In less than a month since the NBEDC conference in Detroit, Gayraud Wilmore had already played a critical role in supporting James Forman and his Manifesto. Wilmore had encouraged Forman to present the Manifesto to the NBEDC. Wilmore's top lieutenant, Rollins, led the organization Wilmore had helped found, the NCBC, in giving Forman its early and unwavering support. Wilmore had personally defended Forman and his demands at Germantown Community Presbyterian, calling Forman a "prophet" and vouching for his character. After the takeover of his own office in New York, Wilmore had helped secure Forman's invitation to address the G.A. in San Antonio, drawing the ire of Orly Mason. At G.A., Wilmore and others had given speeches in order to support Forman and frame his demands in the best possible light. Behind the scenes, Wilmore had talked armed radicals off a ledge, defending Presbyterian leaders from what might have been a tragic and disastrous attack. Partly as a result of his efforts, the denomination had in fact made a commitment to pay at least \$100,000 and seek to raise another \$50 million in what were essentially a form of reparations, even if the denomination declined to use that word or to provide those funds directly to the BEDC. However, Wilmore's greatest contribution to the defense of Forman and the quest for reparations was yet to come: in the form of a powerful and seminal essay known as *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto* and, later, in his efforts to set up two Presbyterian-funded reparations programs which would have a tremendous economic impact over the next several decades.

Wilmore's essay, completed and distributed to NCC officials on June 23, was, according to James Findlay, "the fullest expression of the attitudes and feelings of the militant African

American church leaders regarding the manifesto.”²⁵⁰ As he had done in the cases of “pillars of fire” like Milton Henry, the Palestinian refugees, the rebels in Watts and other urban rebellions, and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, once again Wilmore used his skill as a writer to defend a disruptive and “disrespectable” radical, and to translate his bombastic, fiery rhetoric into language more accessible to dumbfounded white moderates. As a “solid black hyphen,” a defender of Black Power who also operated within majority-white church institutions, yet again Wilmore took on the role of translator or interpreter, in this case trying to alleviate white people’s concerns about Forman’s radical rhetoric and disruptive tactics, while at the same time avoiding too much criticism of Forman.²⁵¹ That month, the NCC began its “long, agonizing process” of responding to the Manifesto, and Wilmore wrote this essay partly “as a way of influencing that process.”²⁵² On June 30, one week after the release of the essay to NCC officials, the United Presbyterian BNM paid to print and distribute the essay widely throughout its denomination, but with a disclaimer that this was not the official position of the denomination.²⁵³ Of course, the BNM had no power to make it the official position, but it could not have featured Wilmore’s essay more prominently than it did, and under a title which implied official status as a statement of “The Church”: *The Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*.

Translating for Forman

In his essay, Gayraud Wilmore made three key contributions to the debate over the Manifesto. He translated the rough-edged Forman’s demands into language more accessible to white liberals and moderates, portrayed Forman as a modern prophet, and argued for the effectiveness of Forman’s tactics. While even many sympathizers with Forman and the

Manifesto were also publicly critical of both, Wilmore was rarely so, careful to avoid “blunt[ing] the razor sharpness of the challenge of the Manifesto” or “weakening the force of the program by making it respectable and reasonable by the standards of the status quo.”²⁵⁴ However, he did express a desire to “dispel the fear and hysteria” in the negative reactions to Forman.²⁵⁵ He criticized Forman’s openness to violence and total state control, but encouraged white people to look past his rhetoric toward the central goals of the Manifesto, saying that churches could endorse the Manifesto’s programs without endorsing its rhetoric, ideology, or tactics.²⁵⁶ Wilmore described reparations as neither new nor, in a sense, radical. He described \$500 million as “modest,” and reparations as “routine” and “not an unusual sort of thing.”²⁵⁷ He cited historical examples of reparations paid to the state of Israel, American Indians, Japanese Americans, and to war veterans through the G.I. bill.²⁵⁸ Wilmore also expressed some acceptance of denominational leaders’ preference to channel funding for such programs through organizations other than Forman’s BEDC.²⁵⁹

Forman as a Prophet

Wilmore’s work of translation also involved a portrayal of James Forman as a modern-day prophet. Wilmore was not the first to portray Forman in this way. By June 23, observers had already been describing Forman as a prophet for seven weeks. The NCBC had called him a “modern-day prophet” on May 7, Ronald Goetz had called him a “strange prophet” like Jeremiah or Amos on June 18, and on that same day Jack Stotts had also called him a “strange prophet.”²⁶⁰ However, Wilmore had been one of the earliest to make this comparison, and his June 23 essay would prove to be one of the most thorough and insightful examples of it. In fact, Wilmore’s

May 11 sermon can be seen as a first draft for his argument in this later essay. The extant pieces of the earlier sermon which provided the seed for this essay were Wilmore's statements that Forman "is a prophet for our times," who "was being used by God to test the churches," and that, "It may well be that for all his vehemence and rude behavior, God is using James Forman..."²⁶¹

Three years later, Wilmore would describe Forman as having entered Riverside "bearded and brandishing his staff like an Old Testament prophet," and as constituting "the prophetic challenge thrown down - a modern-day reenactment of Amos before the temple at Bethel."²⁶²

However, in this essay he made more indirect comparisons to biblical prophets. He wrote, under the subheading, "Forman May Speak God's Judgment On the Church,"

Whatever one may think of James Forman's politics and tactics of disruptive confrontation, the church should recognize that this is not the first time that God has called upon the wrath of those outside of the church to summon it to repentance and obedience.... The time may be at hand for the cleansing of the Temple as our Lord accomplished it. The time may be here, as the Scriptures warned, for "judgment to begin in the household of faith." It may well be that for all his vehemence and rudeness, James Forman is being used by God to declare to the churches, "this night your soul is required of you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" (Luke 12:20)."²⁶³

In the Bible, prophets are people who convey God's word to others. Frequently this message is a negative, critical one, a message of judgment. "Judgment" does not always mean "punishment," rather it means that God is telling God's people that they have done something immoral, and demanding that they change course (often to avoid punishment or other misfortune). Biblical prophets often seem rather socially out-of-place. They are outsiders - foreigners or strange, socially awkward, rude hermits. In the Bible, they usually face a hostile if not murderous reception from those to whom God sends them to deliver God's message. Jesus' behavior in the "cleansing of the Temple" referenced above - in which he violently drives money-changers out

of the Temple in Jerusalem - is in this prophetic mold, rudely pronouncing God's disapproval of socially-accepted profit-making in the midst of a house of worship.²⁶⁴ In this same section, Wilmore also wrote,

... the black militant and Spanish-American leaders who are confronting the churches and disrupting worship services, insofar as they speak the truth (where truth has often been withheld by the false prophets "who cry 'peace! peace!' when there is no peace") render service to the church as unwitting instruments in God's hands for the burning and healing of his people. By the witness of men like James Forman and [Cuban American Los Angeles activist] Eliezer Risco, the church as an institution is called to be renewed, to become the revolutionary vanguard of God's in-breaking Kingdom.²⁶⁵

Wilmore implied that these activists were the true prophets, speaking God's truth, serving as "unwitting instruments in God's hands" and as "witnesses" to the Kingdom of God.

By describing James Forman as a prophet, Wilmore could thereby account for Forman's apparent strangeness, rudeness, abrasiveness, disrespectability, disruptive behavior, and outsider status (as a Marxist, atheist, Black Panther), while at the same time underscoring the potential truth behind his harsh, unwelcome message. As previously discussed, the central plank of Forman's message - church payment of reparations - was opposed, at the time, by ninety-two percent of American churchgoers, according to Gallup.²⁶⁶ So it was a shrewd move for Wilmore and other Manifesto supporters to turn to prophetic figures in the Bible, recognizing that both the idea and its public face were "strange" and outlandish, but that the proposal still deserved serious consideration. Even this strategy for persuading white people to support reparations seemed unlikely to succeed. However, Manifesto advocates faced a dilemma, in that even as they condemned white oppression and racism, they also needed to appeal to the consciences of at least some white people if their cause were to have any hope of success - as Wilmore himself had noted in his 1966-67 reflections on "the white problem."

Disruptive Tactics

Wilmore also argued that Forman's strategy was both necessary and effective. He said that "tactics of confrontation" were necessary "to provoke this nation to recognize the seriousness of the demand for justice."²⁶⁷ He wrote,

The lessons of history teach us that when justice is withheld because those who are strong are too satisfied with the way things are, when the noise of their selfish activity drowns out soft words and polite entreaties, then those who are weak must make a louder noise. They must disturb the false harmony of the *status quo*. They must grasp the attention of those who ignore them by direct and physical confrontation. They must make it disconcerting, if not painful for their opponents to carry on the old unjust routine as if they did not exist or their petitions were invalid. If these factors are seldom orderly or genteel, let us remember that orderliness and gentility are luxuries afforded better at the top than on the bottom.²⁶⁸

Wilmore also cited biblical, Christian, and American historical precedents for disruptive tactics.

If these tactics are *wrong*, then the Triumphal Entry was wrong, the Temple cleansing was wrong; so was the civil disobedience of the early church, the nailing of the Ninety-Five Theses on the church door at Wittenberg, the Boston Tea Party, the conspiracy against the Fugitive Slave Act and demonstrations, strikes and boycotts of the labor movement for recognition and collective bargaining. If American Christians can (no longer) condone violence, they must at least concede that disruptive confrontation is as Christian as street corner revivals and as American as the Fourth of July!²⁶⁹

Wilmore was comparing Forman to a host of heroic yet, at times, unpleasant and disorderly characters, from Jesus of Nazareth to Martin Luther to the abolitionists and even the American Founding Fathers... perhaps recalling his own celebrated high school essay on Benjamin Franklin.

Three years later, Wilmore would write that in Forman's case, disruptive tactics including "hard-line and aggressive action... obviously worked better than standard procedures," for they avoided the fate of being "sidetracked by the usual bureaucratic procrastination and endless red tape."²⁷⁰

... the tactics used by Forman and the BEDC in other cities achieved what years of gentle prodding by church executives and pulpiteers had not been able to achieve - a short circuit of the "business as usual" processes of the churches. The Manifesto sent an unmistakable note of urgency and determination that sent officials scurrying into emergency meetings at the Interchurch Center... and in many other cities across the country.²⁷¹

Much of Wilmore's work had been within that bureaucracy, via "gentle prodding" and "standard procedures," "soft words and polite entreaties," "orderliness and gentility" - such as his service on the drafting committee for the Confession of 1967. Like other black clergy who had long sought change through courteous, diplomatic appeals, Wilmore recognized that Forman's "hard-line" tactics were more effective at getting white people's attention. Wilmore's backing of Forman, and his acrobatic attempts to interpret this "prophet" for white people, highlighted the gulf which the crisis revealed between white and black clergy. White leaders were shocked by Forman's proposals and actions, and by widespread support for the Manifesto by black clergy in their own denominations. Black clergy's welcoming of "hard-line" tactics showed that they did not feel that white leaders were listening to their more irenic appeals, and that they recognized that Forman's strategy might be a more effective one.

This essay, and especially Wilmore's comments on the effectiveness of Forman's tactics, were part of a conversation focused on planning the NCC's response to the Manifesto. Forman had brought his demands to the NCC on May 2, prior to the Riverside incident, and on that date the NCC had asked Forman to give them until the date of the next General Board meeting, June 23, to make a decision - hence the June 23 date of Wilmore's essay, which "was circulated among those who participated in the discussions."²⁷² When consensus proved elusive in June, the NCC's executive board appointed a "Committee of 16" to continue to deliberate and negotiate

throughout the summer.²⁷³ Two participants in those discussions, James Laue and Grover Hartman, summarized the issues over which NCC leaders disagreed.²⁷⁴ According to Laue, white religious leaders were “offended by the rhetoric and revolutionary/Marxist ideology, fearful of constituent reaction back home, ... and concerned about the future of current organizational programs in race, social justice, and human relations.”²⁷⁵ According to James Findlay (quoting from Hartman),

Yet there also seemed to be “broad agreement” among the church officials at the Interchurch Center that the manifesto, “unacceptable as its ideology might be,” had drawn attention “forcefully” to an “iniquitous situation” against which “all too little progress had been made.” African Americans in the meetings reportedly had said: “We have been saying [these things] to you quietly for a long time and, by and large, you have not listened. Now James Forman... has made you listen. This is a step in the right direction.” Among these church people, Forman the rude prophet had succeeded at least partially in his role.²⁷⁶

Wilmore’s essay similarly noted the success of Forman’s unconventional tactics versus the preexisting efforts of black church officials. According to Findlay, NCC documents suggested that “apparently there were connections between [Hartman’s] conclusions and... Wilmore’s essay.”²⁷⁷

In reflecting later on the Manifesto’s overall contribution to racial justice, Wilmore said,

We might have made other kinds of choices about how the churches ought to be confronted with the demands of the Manifesto. The preamble, which was a wild Marxist oriented document, I think hurt the situation more than it helped. If I had had anything to do with it I would not have started out that way... but all in all I think its effect was good, I think it made the church recognize the radical nature of the situation in terms of black people, how they felt about discrimination and racism in the church. It also helped the church to bypass a lot of red tape that had constantly been in the way of implementation of policies that had been decided upon with good will, but never really actualized because of all kinds of bureaucratic snarls.²⁷⁸

As in past analogues, Wilmore remained uncomfortable with the way Forman and other radicals expressed themselves, and saw much of his role as trying to soften the edges of such individuals' "wild" rhetoric. However, the Manifesto crisis taught, or at least reminded Wilmore of the merits of such "disrespectable" strategies - sometimes they might end the conversation before it could begin, but at other times they had the ability to jump-start a conversation which had previously seemed incapable of attracting the attention of power-brokers.

Gayraud Wilmore has also reflected on the Manifesto in the context of the development of Black Theology. Of the NCBC's June 13, 1969 Black Theology Statement, he wrote,

It is impossible to miss the significance of the Black Manifesto and the call for reparations in this statement. It makes unmistakably clear that what was termed 'Black Theology' by those who gathered in Atlanta amid the storms of international controversy which broke out between Black and White churchmen was, from the beginning, rooted and grounded in the demand for the reparational empowerment of the Black community.²⁷⁹

Wilmore also called the events surrounding the Manifesto, "the scenario for the praxis of the theological movement which had begun two years earlier but received its driving force from the struggle between IFCO and the denominational mission bureaucracies."²⁸⁰ While the term "black theology" was used as early as the fall of 1968, and was made famous by James Cone's April 1969 book, Cone, as previously discussed, has pointed out that use of the term among radical black clergy became commonplace between April and June 1969 - the very months in which the Manifesto was itself being hotly debated. Because of this overlap, it is almost impossible to determine whether the increased use of the term "black theology" stemmed more from Cone's book or Forman's Manifesto. However, it seems highly likely that over the course of those months the two documents, especially as interpreted by NCBC members, mutually informed one

another, even as NCBC members and others sought to faithfully follow this new theology through the praxis of pressing the case for reparations. Therefore, in a sense, the three founders of this new theology were Gayraud Wilmore, James Cone, and James Forman.

White Presbyterian Responses after Wilmore's *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*

Most white Presbyterians who responded to the Manifesto after June 30 likely had read Wilmore's *Church's Response*, and had also witnessed or read about Forman's G.A. address, which has been so carefully stage-managed by Wilmore and his inner circle of black, Latinx, and liberal white Presbyterian leaders. These later white Presbyterian response can therefore be considered, at least in part, as responses to Wilmore's own views, and in some cases reflect his influence.

Manifesto Supporters

David Ramage, Jr., a BNM official, wrote the foreword for Wilmore's *Church's Response*.²⁸¹ He was the official responsible for the distribution of this essay, via his department's regular mailing. Ramage noted that a 1965 denominational statement had recognized the merits of creative tension, in that "conflict and controversy... may be a positive means toward justice and reconciliation," and had also called for all voices to be heard even when "contrary to what many... believe to be proper."²⁸² Ramage also recalled a 1967 statement of the NCC - of which the UPCUSA was a member - that such a crisis can be "a gift of God, though given in the form of judgment," with disruptions providing an "opportunity to build new social structures that can be more just and equitable."²⁸³ The NCC had added that "we stand with

the aggrieved, and will heed their demands and recriminations with understanding and take their part whenever the requirements of justice impel us.”²⁸⁴ Ramage promoted Wilmore as “a symbol of the black men among us who are struggling with the meaning of this time and attempting, with peculiar gifts of experience and insight, to reflect on the Church’s responsibility.”²⁸⁵ Ramage’s statement was not particularly lengthy or eloquent, and stopped short of an explicit endorsement of the Manifesto’s demands. However, he did remind Presbyterians that what they had affirmed in the past suggested quite strongly that they should accept such demands. An implicit endorsement of the Manifesto based on the denomination’s own words, mailed out through an official organ of the church, was as much as Manifesto proponents could have hoped for from a white denominational official.

Officials for the other major American Presbyterian denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.), also gave the Manifesto a favorable response. At their 1970 General Assembly, R. Matthew Lynn, moderator of the PC (US), and Wayne P. Todd, chair of its Council on Church and Society, led their denomination in crafting an statement supporting the Manifesto, though with some reservations.²⁸⁶ They recognized potential objections to the Manifesto’s ideology and its proponents’ tactics, and said that it “would be irresponsible” to “uncritically endorse” the Manifesto, but warned against focusing too much on those elements, instead of on the needs to which the document bore witness.²⁸⁷ They added that “to reject the Manifesto outright would be equally irresponsible,” and would be “to close our ears to an impassioned cry of the neighbor... and - quite possibly - to miss an opportunity to hear the Word of God.”²⁸⁸ They also provided justification for James Forman’s rhetoric and tactics, noting that “calm, reasonable, nonviolent appeals” have not garnered as much attention as “harsh, threatening demands.”²⁸⁹ They endorsed

the principle of reparations for biblical and theological reasons, including the principle that such funds should be “available for the use of black leaders selected by black people and accountable to black people, not to us.”²⁹⁰ They closed by saying that they “discern the judgment of God in the harsh indictment of the Black Manifesto,” as well as “his mercy in this opportunity to respond to the demands of justice.”²⁹¹ This statement clearly reflected the influence of Wilmore’s essay, in terms of looking beyond potentially objectionable aspects of the Manifesto to the human need to which it witnessed, in attending to God’s word and judgment through the Manifesto, and in recognizing the effectiveness of Forman’s tactics.

Manifesto Opponents

Some white Presbyterians, however, were unpersuaded. At a September 1969 General Board meeting of the NCC, Presbyterian layman and city planner Calvin Hamilton of Los Angeles sought to encourage the Board, rather than accepting the Manifesto, to instead endorse a statement composed by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) condemning the Manifesto’s rhetoric.²⁹² He contended that laymen in general expected the Board to reject the Manifesto for its openness to violence and its harsh criticisms of churches.²⁹³ Edler Hawkins responded by condemning this proposal, which was subsequently defeated.²⁹⁴

John R. Fry, a white liberal Presbyterian minister in Chicago, also opposed the Manifesto, and expressed concerns about responsiveness to the concerns of [white] laypeople. He thought the UPCUSA’s structure was too hierarchical, and he narrated the Manifesto crisis as a symptom of overly hierarchical, bureaucratic denominational governance, accusing anti-democratic leadership of empowering “radicals” and of being insufficiently transparent in allowing Forman

a speaking slot at the General Assembly.²⁹⁵ He was unsatisfied by denominational officials' explanation that Forman "was going to speak anyway," so they wanted to "provide an orderly context" for his speech.²⁹⁶ He was especially incensed by the fact that officials were not willing to name the particular BNM staff or COCAR leaders who had recommended Forman's invitation, identifying them only as "responsible representatives."²⁹⁷ As previously noted, he called this invitation extended to Forman an "elitist caper," and said, "it was simply understood that the radicals on the staff had engineered the whole appearance of Forman."²⁹⁸

He was surely correct, at least in part, in suggesting that black BNM staff and COCAR representatives, including Wilmore, George, Neigh, and Hawkins, were the "responsible representatives" who had "engineered" the invitation, but it is striking to hear them called "elitists" who were abusing a hierarchical system. While much of Fry's language reflected the garden variety racism of white men who consider themselves to be liberal and non-racist, it is also a testament to the success of black Presbyterians' century of struggle in the UPCUSA (and the PC (USA) before that), in their uncompromising advocacy for racial justice, and in their constant demands for a seat at the table, on the staff, and in the boardroom where the denomination's decisions were being made.

Malcolm P. Calhoun, a white minister from North Carolina, was one of the most fervent racially progressive ministers in the PC (US). He had been the primary force behind the invitation to and visit of Martin Luther King, Jr. - and Gayraud Wilmore - to Montreat Conference Center in 1965.²⁹⁹ Wilmore had moved up his speaking slot at the conference to cover for King at Calhoun's request, because of King's absence in the aftermath of the Watts Rebellion.³⁰⁰ In his memoir, Calhoun spoke highly of Wilmore's three speeches to that

conference.³⁰¹ In his reflections on Forman and the Manifesto, he also quoted from Wilmore's May 11 sermon describing Forman as a "prophet" at Germantown Community Presbyterian.³⁰² Undoubtedly he took Wilmore's endorsement of the Manifesto quite seriously. However, even more so than their northern counterparts, southern white liberal clergy knew the costs of getting too far in front of their more conservative congregations on social issues. Calhoun did express appreciation for his denomination's 1970 statement, which had, in his interpretation, "while not endorsing the Manifesto, advocated the Church's responsibility for trying to understand the situation out of which it arose and to discern God's will at that moment in history."³⁰³ For Calhoun, however, the Manifesto itself was a bridge too far. This view largely fit within Calhoun's overall assessment of Black Power as a negative development within the Civil Rights Movement.

Calhoun described the Manifesto as a document which "vented rage and frustration of a black man who had spent his life working for justice on behalf of persons with dark skins."³⁰⁴ He said that Forman spoke via "fiery rhetoric," and noted that he had described the U.S. as the "most barbaric country in the world," and had professed a desire to "help bring this government down."³⁰⁵ Calhoun objected to the Manifesto's openness to violence and support for total state control, and portrayed it in the context of Black Power's supposed turn away from Jesus and Gandhi to more radical thinkers like Frantz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (a text which appeared in the bibliography of Wilmore's *Church's Response*).³⁰⁶ Calhoun also charged the Manifesto with having effectively destroyed IFCO as an organization.³⁰⁷

Ernest Campbell and the Riverside Church

Since its 1930 founding, the Riverside Church in the City of New York, located in Morningside Heights across the street from the Interchurch Center and Union Theological Seminary, has been a powerful symbol of the mainline church. As James Findlay points out, “[these] three institutions seemed almost the epitome of mainstream Protestantism.”³⁰⁸ Findlay adds that “the fact that one of Riverside’s principal benefactor’s [sic] was the family of John D. Rockefeller and that the church was located on the edge of Harlem were also important symbolic points that were not lost on Forman and his supporters.”³⁰⁹ Riverside’s senior pastor in 1969, Ernest Campbell, was a Presbyterian, despite Riverside’s interdenominational status. Campbell’s initial reaction to the Manifesto was a negative one, but over the ensuing months he would become one of the Manifesto’s strongest white supporters.

On May 3, James Forman had met with Campbell, and, according to Campbell, they had informally agreed that Forman and his supporters would merely distribute the Manifesto outside the church the next day.³¹⁰ When Forman instead interrupted Riverside’s worship over Campbell’s protests, the senior pastor, along with the other pastors, the choir, and more than two-thirds of the congregation, walked out of the church in outrage.³¹¹ Campbell spoke on May 10 regarding the incident via the church’s radio broadcast, mostly focusing not on the demands of the Manifesto itself, but on how the church was taking steps to prevent future worship disruptions.³¹² The church secured a restraining order against Forman and threatened to call the police if he returned.³¹³

However, in that broadcast Campbell also acknowledged, unlike many of Forman’s critics, the basic principle of reparations, and reported that, after consultation with its interracial

leadership, the Riverside Church had decided to set aside a portion of its annual budget to this end, “for the rapid improvement of all disadvantaged people in this country.”³¹⁴ That was not the end of Campbell’s development with regard to the Manifesto. On July 13, 1969, Campbell preached a sermon at Riverside, entitled, “The Case for Reparations.” His biblical text was the story of Zacchaeus, in which a corrupt tax collector, despised and ostracized by his neighbors, climbs a tree to catch sight of Jesus amid a crowd.³¹⁵ Jesus calls him down from the tree and welcomes him back into the community, and Zacchaeus then promises, “the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold.”³¹⁶ Ernest Campbell suggested that the “half of my goods” given to the poor is an act of generosity, while the return of ill-gotten gains fourfold is “justice,” or, “to put it differently, Zacchaeus made reparation.”³¹⁷ Campbell portrayed the concept as neither new nor outlandish, finding support for it in the Old Testament, Jewish and Catholic theology, and statements by the World Council of Churches and by a “very reputable, conservative, orthodox Baptist theologian.”³¹⁸ Campbell said that all these authorities supported the idea that forgiveness and repentance require reparation, the alternative being “cheap grace.”³¹⁹ He recognized that no money could repay the harm done to black people, but said that money could indicate a “good intention, and can hint at a new direction for the church and for the nation.”³²⁰ Campbell gave an overview of the many sins of white Christians against black people, and also listed and refuted several counterclaims against reparations.³²¹ The only criticism Campbell raised about the Manifesto was the fact that it promoted both reparations and radical revolution.³²² He encouraged his congregation to support “reparations that lead not to revolution, but to reconciliation,” for, “God was in Christ

reconciling the world to himself, *and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation,*” which “is our ultimate commitment as Christians.”³²³

Campbell did mention one other biblical passage in his sermon, Exodus 22:1, which discusses restitution for stolen livestock, but he made no reference to biblical prophets.³²⁴ This omission is surprising for two reasons. First, Campbell was at the center of the Manifesto controversy, and was at least reading, if not speaking with, people like Wilmore, Rollins, Abernathy, Stotts, Ramage, Goetz, and Schomer. So it is curious that a kind of biblical reference which each of them found useful did not make it into Campbell’s sermon. Second, Campbell’s master’s thesis was about the book of Amos, a book explicitly cited by many supporters of the Manifesto.³²⁵ Furthermore, the prophets of the Hebrew Bible, and their relevance to contemporary social concerns, were not merely a bygone interest from Campbell’s seminary days. In 1972, Campbell publicly criticized Billy Graham for not publicly opposing the Vietnam War, saying that President Richard M. Nixon “needs a Micaiah not a Zedekiah, a prophet, not a mere house chaplain.”³²⁶ In this open letter, Campbell also referred to “the social pronouncements of the prophets, Mary’s Magnificat, the quotation from Isaiah with which Jesus inaugurated his ministry in the synagogue,” and Matthew 25’s call to care for the hungry, poor, and oppressed.³²⁷ With the exception of Matthew 25, each of these biblical references had been a part of the Manifesto discussion three years earlier.

Why had this scholar of prophetic biblical social witness left the prophets out of his “Case for Reparations”? Perhaps Campbell was still smarting from the initial confrontation, and by July he was willing to endorse reparations, but he was not yet ready to dub Forman a prophet. Perhaps he thought the prophets too frequently cited during the Manifesto crisis, and thought

Zacchaeus a more pedagogically promising passage for this particular situation. Perhaps, however, his preference for reconciliation over revolution, and his belief that reconciliation is Christians' "ultimate commitment," indicated that while he was not opposed to justice, his greater concern was for reconciled relationships, an end which is better expressed in the story of a tax collector being restored to relationship with his neighbors than in the story in which Jesus' own neighbors drive him out of his hometown.

In September 1969, Riverside's worship was again disrupted, this time by Carl C. McIntire, Jr.'s presentation of a "Christian Manifesto" asking for mainline reparations payments to fundamentalists. McIntire was a Presbyterian minister from the fundamentalist "Bible Presbyterian Church" (which had broken away from mainstream Presbyterianism several decades previously) and head of the "International Council of Christian Churches" (a fundamentalist NCC counterpart).³²⁸ In an imitation of Forman's visit to Riverside, McIntire marched into the church's sanctuary to read aloud from his own "Christian Manifesto."³²⁹ He demanded \$3 billion in reparations from mainline churches and the "return" of institutions like Princeton Theological Seminary to the "Bible-believing" churches for their alleged offenses against fundamentalists.³³⁰ McIntire also followed Forman around, presenting his own Manifesto at several of the same mainline churches at which Forman appeared, including Abington Presbyterian in Pennsylvania.³³¹ McIntire was not a supporter of the Black Manifesto, which he characterized as the "voice of hell" and "Communist."³³² Rather he used this opportunity to imitate Forman's tactics and score points against both Black Power and white liberalism. Like Episcopal laywoman Dorothy Faber, McIntire was a right-wing leader opposed to Black Power

and black nationalism, who nevertheless found something worth imitating in the tactics of radical black leaders.

Carl McIntire's presentation at Riverside drew a firm rebuke from Ernest Campbell. Campbell argued that while there was "solid substance" in the Black Manifesto, "the Christian Manifesto rests on the marshy foundation of innuendoes and self-pity."³³³ He criticized McIntire's "inability to recognize that even a capitalistic system functioning in a republic can stand under the judgment of God," and affirmed the Black Manifesto's effort to relate faith to contemporary life, saying that Christians should be "thankful" for people like Forman who expand the relevance of Christianity beyond the "individual heart" to social concerns.³³⁴ Campbell closed by rhetorically countersuing McIntire, contending that those raised as fundamentalists could "file a counterclaim for reparations against fundamentalism on the grounds of withheld truth," and that mainline churches could demand payment from fundamentalists for "time spent attempting to counsel the casualties of fundamentalism back to spiritual health."³³⁵ Campbell, who had a degree from Bob Jones University, perhaps had standing to make such a demand personally.

The following year, Campbell published a book, entitled *Christian Manifesto*, in which he argued that Christians ought to be concerned both with social and spiritual issues ("horizontal and vertical dimensions"), lamenting his observation that social activists often neglected the "vital, saving, living presence" of Jesus, while "the evangelicals in this country have limited the gospel, impeded its proclamation, and hindered its acceptance by refusing to be concerned with political and social justice."³³⁶ His concerns for balancing inner and outer priorities no doubt reflected his dramatic recent encounters with the Marxist Forman and the fundamentalist

McIntire. In this book, Campbell also published his “Case for Reparations” sermon, described himself as “sympathetic to the reparations concept” “from the start” despite reservations about its “revolutionary rhetoric,” and said that he included the sermon “toward the end of the book in the hope that what has gone before will help explain convictions argued here.”³³⁷ Campbell, in his position as pastor of the flagship church of mainline Protestantism and in his public confrontations with Forman and McIntire, exemplified the dilemma faced by the white male liberal mainline establishment leaders in his era, who found themselves caught in between the demands of appropriately impatient immediatists and continually intransigent reactionaries. Unlike some other establishment leaders, Campbell evidenced considerable growth and development in the months following the Manifesto crisis, growth similar to that of some of the eight white clergy to whom Martin Luther King, Jr. addressed his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.”³³⁸ Campbell’s first responses to the Manifesto were a walkout and an effort to secure police protection against supposedly threatening radicals. However, later he preached in support of reparations, defended Forman and reparations against McIntire, and still later he stuck by his pro-reparations stance and republished it as a part of a book.

Aftermath: Two Long-Term Presbyterian Reparations Vehicles

While James Forman impressed black clergy like Gayraud Wilmore with his ability to call attention to racial justice concerns, in the end he was unsuccessful at securing reparations from almost all of the dozens of denominations and institutions which were the targets of his protests. There were, however, two prominent exceptions, in the Episcopal Church and the United Presbyterian Church. A full account of the response to the Manifesto by the Episcopal

Church, and of the responses of all other denominations and institutions to the Manifesto, is beyond the scope of this dissertation, and has been well chronicled by Robert Lecky, Elliott Wright, James Findlay, Jennifer Harvey, and Gardiner Shattuck.³³⁹ This treatment focuses on the aftermath in the United Presbyterian Church.

While Wilmore and other black Presbyterians were not able to convince the denomination to meet Forman's demands fully, they were able to draw some meaningful, concrete results out of this crisis. According to Bryant George, they "had the foresight and intelligence to use this rude intervention to get something done that was worthwhile."³⁴⁰ By 1970, the UPCUSA had followed through on several of its Manifesto-related promises. It had paid \$100,000 to IFCO and had begun work on creating opportunities for land ownership among black Southerners.³⁴¹ However, the United Presbyterian response was not limited to the resolutions of the San Antonio Assembly. In response to the crisis surrounding the Manifesto, according to Wilmore,

...the church increased its commitment to grassroots organizations and the Emergency Fund for Freedom, which financed bail bonds, grants in aid to freedom fighters, and created an atmosphere of affirmative action which produced the Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO) and the Program for the Self-Development of People. Once again the UPCUSA stepped out in front of many other denominations to empower African Americans and other minorities to catch their own fish and eat them. Before and after the San Antonio Assembly several millions of Presbyterian dollars flowed into black businesses and economic programs through the BNM, PEDCO, Self-Development, and [IFCO].... If it can be said that Black enterprise blossomed even in the midst of unprecedented civil disorder in the urban centers, both black and white denominations deserve some of the credit, and not least among them was the UPCUSA.³⁴²

Wilmore, Bryant George, and others convinced the denomination to respond to the crisis by creating two initiatives which, in the self-determination spirit of Black Power, enabled working class people, especially African Americans, to improve their own economic circumstances.³⁴³

The Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO)

One of these initiatives, the Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO), provided millions in low-interest loans to minority-owned businesses from 1969 to 1988.

PEDCO was actually created just prior to the Manifesto crisis, by order of the 1968 G.A.³⁴⁴

Strictly speaking, it was not, therefore, part of the church's response to the Manifesto. However, it was the result of denominational support for Black Power, via investment in poor and black communities under the oversight of those communities themselves. Like IFCO, it was the kind of effort mainline churches had already been getting into in the 1967-69 period. The Black Manifesto's contribution was not so much to create those kinds of initiatives, but to call greater attention to them, and to encourage people to view these efforts not just as charity or even social/racial justice efforts, but as reparations... as payments to those who had been wronged, paid by those who had benefitted from such wrongs. Thus while PEDCO was not a direct result of the Manifesto, the two deserve to be spoken of in the same breath. Furthermore, the Manifesto helped to provide a further rationale for PEDCO and, therefore, new energy in the early days of this initiative's development.

The church initially designated \$8 million for PEDCO to "invest in low-interest loans for minority enterprises."³⁴⁵ PEDCO also "secured funding from the Ford Foundation, the Department of Transportation, and the Small Business Administration," "leverag[ing] approximately \$120 million from other financial institutions for loans to minority businesses."³⁴⁶ According to Bryant George,

Businesses such as minority-owned car-repair shops, beauty parlors, restaurants, meat-packing plants and shopping centers in the heart of the ghetto - rural and urban - would

never have come into being without some kind of jump-start from some external source. For many, PEDCO was that source.³⁴⁷

PEDCO made loans to entities like “Freedom National Bank,” the “Interracial Council for Business Opportunity,” and “Neighbors Organized for Action in Housing.”³⁴⁸ It financed low-income housing, and supported micro-enterprises both through loans themselves and through financial counseling.³⁴⁹ Despite its high-risk loans and continually embattled status due to its controversial beginnings, PEDCO was able to support minority businesses for almost twenty years until it exhausted its funds in 1988.³⁵⁰

Self-Development of People

The second major reparations initiative resulting from Black Power and/or the Manifesto began in 1970. At that year’s Assembly, the majority-black Synod of Catawba proposed spending \$17,000 on economic development among black Southerners.³⁵¹ In keeping with United Presbyterians’ 1969 commitment, in response to the Manifesto, to raise a fund of \$50 million “to be used in depressed areas and among depressed people,” the Assembly took this opportunity to begin such a fund, creating the National (later “Presbyterian”) Committee on the Self-Development of People (NCOSDOP or simply SDOP).³⁵² However, when a committee proposed that SDOP be funded by asking boards and agencies to dedicate five percent of their budgets for such a fund, the Assembly voted down this proposal.³⁵³ Amy Miracle describes what happened next:

Presbyterian Life, [sic] reported that “near despair swept the ranks of black delegates.” Kenneth Neigh was seated next to John Coventry Smith on the podium. The two used pencil and pads to determine if their agencies could survive a cut of one and a quarter million dollars in the next year. John Coventry Smith then went to the podium and

announced that the Council on Ecumenical Mission and Relations [led by Smith] and the Board of National Missions [led by Neigh] were going to contribute a million and a quarter dollars to begin the Fund for the Self-Development of the People. It was the dramatic action needed to launch the fund and restore the faith of black Presbyterians.³⁵⁴

In its first ten years, SDOP provided over \$20 million in community-development grants in impoverished communities, allowing members of those communities to manage the funds themselves.³⁵⁵ SDOP also made important non-military grants to freedom fighters in South Africa, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, and Zimbabwe to support their struggles against colonialism and white supremacy.³⁵⁶

SDOP is still active today. Partly funded through the denomination's annual One Great Hour of Sharing offering, SDOP has made tens of millions of dollars in grants since 1970, and continues to disburse several hundred thousand dollars in aid every year.³⁵⁷ It has helped to create "new jobs, community-controlled businesses, schools, self-respect, and a myriad of other enterprises to enable people to develop their own potential."³⁵⁸

PEDCO provided loans rather than grants, SDOP provides grants on the basis of socioeconomic class rather than race, and the contributions of both pale in comparison to the actual wealth created, for the UPCUSA and for others, by centuries of enslaved labor and racist economic exploitation. The denomination also was unwilling to fund the BEDC directly, and has never referred to either of these initiatives, or to its \$100,000 payment to IFCO in 1969, as "reparations." However, given a relatively loose definition of "reparations," United Presbyterians' response to the crisis surrounding the Black Manifesto has in fact constituted one of very few successful reparations efforts in U.S. history.

-
- ¹ Ronald P. Salzberger and Mary C. Turck, eds., *Reparations for Slavery: A Reader* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), pp. 69-70; Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright, eds., *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p. 3; Cone, *For My People*, p. 44.
- ² “The Black Manifesto,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 80-89), p. 84.
- ³ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”
- ⁴ Cone, *For My People*, pp. 44, 222 (note 26).
- ⁵ Cone, *For My People*, p. 44.
- ⁶ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 108. Quoting from Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 3. As to “what was new” about these events, perhaps as an explanation for why they caused such “vibrations,” Lecky and Wright pointed to several factors. “One was a Manifesto rhetoric more militant, threatening, and revolutionary than most churchmen were accustomed to hearing. Another was the large financial claims on what to some was already the most liberal, though poorest, segment of society, religion. Many white religious leaders were shocked to be told their goodwill was neither good nor wilful enough. Still a third new factor was the linking of economic reparations to religion in the fight against racism and poverty. An implication was that organized religion might have more influence than it thought it had.” Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 4.
- ⁷ Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., “The Ecumenical Legacy of Gayraud Wilmore: A Tribute to a Mentor,” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*, ed. Eugene G. Turner (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999, pp. 55-65), p. 56.
- ⁸ See Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian*, first ed., pp. 84-87.
- ⁹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 6.
- ¹⁰ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 6.
- ¹¹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 6.
- ¹² Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 5-6.
- ¹³ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 6.
- ¹⁴ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 6-7.
- ¹⁵ Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 6-7, 315.
- ¹⁶ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 7. Findlay says IFCO was created in May 1967. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 188.
- ¹⁷ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 7; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 110.
- ¹⁸ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 7; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 110.
- ¹⁹ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 73.
- ²⁰ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 7.
- ²¹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 8.
- ²² Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 188. Also quoted in Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 110.
- ²³ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 8.
- ²⁴ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 8.
- ²⁵ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118.
- ²⁶ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 9.
- ²⁷ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 234.
- ²⁸ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10.
- ²⁹ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 60.
- ³⁰ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 60. Quoting from Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 543.
- ³¹ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 60; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 545.
- ³² Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10.
- ³³ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10.

-
- ³⁴ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118; Salzberger, *Reparations for Slavery*, p. 69; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 200. According to Harvey, there were “nearly 1,000” who attended, Salzberger says “more than eight hundred” attended, Findlay says there were 600 participants, and Lecky says there were there were “more than 500” people registered for the conference.
- ³⁵ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 61. Includes quote from Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, p. 545.
- ³⁶ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118.
- ³⁷ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 310 (note 12).
- ³⁸ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10.
- ³⁹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 1; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 202. According to Miracle, the name change was meant to signal the international implications of the organization’s goals. Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 62.
- ⁴⁰ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 11; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 239.
- ⁴¹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 10; Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 74; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 246.
- ⁴² Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 201.
- ⁴³ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 237; Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 62; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 202.
- ⁴⁴ Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 202.
- ⁴⁵ “The Black Manifesto,” p. 84; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 14.
- ⁴⁶ Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 201; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 14.
- ⁴⁷ Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, pp. 543-548.
- ⁴⁸ Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 201; Salzberger, *Reparations for Slavery*, p. 75.
- ⁴⁹ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 235.
- ⁵⁰ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 237.
- ⁵¹ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 235.
- ⁵² Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 201.
- ⁵³ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 235.
- ⁵⁴ “The Black Manifesto,” p. 82.
- ⁵⁵ “The Black Manifesto,” p. 83.
- ⁵⁶ Cone, *For My People*, p. 44; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 137.
- ⁵⁷ Cone, *For My People*, p. 45.
- ⁵⁸ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. 237. Wilmore does not provide further source information for this quote, beyond the title of the newspaper.
- ⁵⁹ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 16; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 118.
- ⁶⁰ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 16-17.
- ⁶¹ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 120. Quoting from Arnold Schuchter, *Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970), p. 6.
- ⁶² Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 17.
- ⁶³ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 157; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 120.

⁶⁴ “Thus ironically the concentration of national leadership of the churches in a single urban center, which in earlier years helped greatly in shaping church policies and tactics of direct involvement in civil rights activities, in 1969 became a key point of vulnerability, increasing the frequency and then heightening the visibility of attacks upon the churches by Forman and others.” Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 203.

⁶⁵ The organization endorsed the Manifesto on May 5, and its Board of Directors issued a statement in support of this decision on May 7. Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 207; “The National Committee of Black Churchmen’s Response to the Black Manifesto,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 90-92), p. 90.

⁶⁶ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 74; “The National Committee of Black Churchmen’s Response to the Black Manifesto,” p. 91.

⁶⁷ Findlay, *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 207.

⁶⁸ Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 20, 145-147.

⁶⁹ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 239-240.

⁷⁰ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 195.

⁷¹ “The National Committee of Black Churchmen’s Response to the Black Manifesto,” pp. 90-91. See also Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 207-208.

⁷² Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 208.

⁷³ Cone, *For My People*, p. 44.

⁷⁴ Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 207.

⁷⁵ “Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969,” p. 100.

⁷⁶ “Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969,” p. 100.

See also “Black Theology: A Statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen” (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, p. 1310); Preston N. Williams, “The Atlanta Document: An Interpretation” (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, pp.1311-12), pp. 1311-1312.

⁷⁷ Most NCBC members were probably supporters of the Manifesto given their organization’s enthusiastic endorsement of it. Members of note who were signers of both the 1966 Statue of Liberty Statement and the 1970 Black Declaration of Independence - and therefore were members throughout the 1969 debate over the Manifesto - included Episcopalian Tollie Caution, Presbyterians Edler Hawkins, Gayraud Wilmore, Metz Rollins, E. Wellington Butts, Clarence Cave, and Leon Watts, AME Zion minister Calvin Marshall, UCC minister Charles Cobb, and United Methodist Gilbert Caldwell. Signers of the 1966 but not the 1970 statement included NCC officials Anna Arnold Hedgeman, J. Oscar Lee, and Benjamin Payton, Episcopalian Paul Washington, Nathan Wright, and Leon Modeste, Presbyterians Bryant George, Reginald Hawkins, LeRoy Patrick, Isaiah Pogue, Eugene Turner, and Walter Bowen, and Progressive National Baptist Gardner Taylor. Hedgeman and Payton had both left the NCC in 1967. Signers of the 1970 but not the 1966 statement included Catholic priest Lawrence Lucas, UCC minister Albert Cleage, Presbyterian Oscar McCloud, and United Methodist James Lawson. Hedgeman was the only woman and layperson to sign the Black Power Statement, and the only woman and one of two laypeople to sign the Statue of Liberty Statement. The only women, and two of the three laypeople, to sign the 1970 Black Declaration of Independence were “Miss Janet Douglas” and “Mrs. Frank E. Jones,” both of New York City, and both listed without denominational affiliation. ““Black Power”: A Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966,” in Warner R. Traynham, *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective* (Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 66-78 (Appendix A)), pp. 75-78; “Black Declaration of Independence: an Advertisement Which Appeared in *The New York Times*, Friday, July 3, 1970,” in Warner R. Traynham, *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective* (Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 116-119 (Appendix J)), pp. 118-119.

⁷⁸ “Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969,” p. 101.

⁷⁹ “Black Theology: A Statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen” (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, p. 1310); Williams, “The Atlanta Document.”

⁸⁰ Williams, “The Atlanta Document,” p. 1311.

-
- 81 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," pp. 1311-1312.
- 82 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," pp. 1311-1312.
- 83 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312.
- 84 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312.
- 85 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," pp. 1311-1312.
- 86 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312.
- 87 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312.
- 88 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312.
- 89 Williams, "The Atlanta Document," p. 1312; "Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969," p. 102.
- 90 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 207.
- 91 Gerstle, *American Crucible*, pp. 284-295.
- 92 "The Black Manifesto," p. 87.
- 93 Ralph David Abernathy, "A Black Preacher Looks at the Black Manifesto" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 33, August 13, 1969, p. 1064).
- 94 Abernathy, "A Black Preacher Looks at the Black Manifesto."
- 95 Abernathy, "A Black Preacher Looks at the Black Manifesto."
- 96 Abernathy, "A Black Preacher Looks at the Black Manifesto."
- 97 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 193.
- 98 Michel Marriott, "Muhammad Kenyatta, 47, Dies; Professor and Civil Rights Leader," *The New York Times*, January 6, 1992, p. B10, accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/06/nyregion/muhammad-kenyatta-47-dies-professor-and-civil-rights-leader.html>; "The Black Manifesto," p. 87.
- 99 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, pp. 193-194.
- 100 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 194. Harvey identifies him as from Philadelphia. Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p.126.
- 101 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, pp. 194-195; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 126, quoting from Schuchter, *Reparations*, p. 14.
- 102 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, pp. 194-195; Schuchter, *Reparations*, p. 14.
- 103 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 195; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 127.
- 104 Ronald G. Goetz, "Black Manifesto: The Great White Hope" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 25, June 18, 1969, pp. 832-833).
- 105 Howard Schomer, "The Manifesto and the Magnificat" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 26, June 25, 1969, p. 867); Luke 1:46-55. This biblical passage, "The Magnificat," is attributed to Mary (the mother of Jesus) upon learning of the divine nature of her fetus.
- 106 Schomer, "The Manifesto and the Magnificat," p. 867.
- 107 William Stringfellow, "Reparations: Repentance as a Necessity to Reconciliation," in *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*, eds. Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969, pp. 52-64), p. 53. This volume was published in 1969, sometime after September 3, because it includes a timeline of events which ends on that date. The acknowledgements are dated July 4, 1969, so the bulk of its content may have been composed in May and June.
- 108 Stringfellow, "Reparations," p. 53.
- 109 Stringfellow, "Reparations," pp. 53-54.
- 110 Stringfellow, "Reparations," p. 54.
- 111 Stringfellow, "Reparations," pp. 55-56.
- 112 Stringfellow, "Reparations," pp. 55-56.
- 113 Stringfellow, "Reparations," pp. 55-56. Therefore reparations "has the enormous virtue of treating racial history in this nation realistically and honestly by the unavoidable implication in reparations that there has been culpable conduct on the part of those who pay the damages."
- 114 Stringfellow, "Reparations," p. 58.
- 115 Stringfellow, "Reparations," p. 58.
- 116 Stringfellow, "Reparations," pp. 58-59.
- 117 Stringfellow, "Reparations," p. 60.
- 118 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 190.

-
- 119 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 190.
- 120 “Balking Episcopal Parishes” (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, p. 1306).
- 121 “Balking Episcopal Parishes.”
- 122 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 188.
- 123 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, pp. 188-189.
- 124 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 189.
- 125 Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 120.
- 126 Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 120.
- 127 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 196.
- 128 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 196.
- 129 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 196.
- 130 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 196.
- 131 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 189.
- 132 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 195.
- 133 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 189.
- 134 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 189.
- 135 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 195.
- 136 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 195.
- 137 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 191; Charles V. Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church,” *Episcopal News Service*, August 11, 1969.
- 138 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, pp. 191-192.
- 139 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 140 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 141 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 142 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 143 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 144 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 145 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 146 Willie, “The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church.”
- 147 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 4, 12; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 228 (note 30).
- 148 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 228 (note 30); Salzberger, *Reparations for Slavery*, p. 75.
- 149 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 4; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 228-229 (note 30).
- 150 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 12.
- 151 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 21.
- 152 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 207.
- 153 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 207.
- 154 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 207.
- 155 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 207.
- 156 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 218; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 221.
- 157 Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 208.
- 158 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 12.
- 159 Anthony B. Pinn, *Becoming “America’s Problem Child”: An Outline of Pauli Murray’s Religious Life and Theology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2008), p. 83.
- 160 Pinn, *Becoming “America’s Problem Child”*, p. 83.
- 161 Pinn, *Becoming “America’s Problem Child”*, p. 83.
- 162 Pinn, *Becoming “America’s Problem Child”*, pp. 83-84.
- 163 Pinn, *Becoming “America’s Problem Child”*, p. 84.
- 164 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 56.
- 165 Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]”; Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 30.

¹⁶⁶ The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a coalition of Civil Rights groups working in Mississippi, including Forman's SNCC, invited CORAR to join them in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, so COFO and CORAR had offices across the street from each other in that city. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 30; Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 63.

¹⁶⁷ McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

¹⁶⁸ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160. Calhoun was quoting from "Gayraud Wilmore, Unpublished Sermon, Germantown Community Church, Germantown, Pennsylvania, May 4, 1969. Papers of Malcolm Calhoun." Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 284 (note 21).

Calhoun's May 4 dating of the sermon appears inaccurate. May 4 was the day of the Riverside incident. Also, another source for this sermon, dated May 12, refers to it as having occurred "yesterday" - hence it likely occurred on Sunday, May 11, 1969. "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here," *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 12, 1969, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries.

¹⁶⁹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 59.

¹⁷⁰ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 60.

¹⁷¹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 60, quoting from 1985 interview with Gayraud S. Wilmore at New York Theological Seminary.

¹⁷² Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 74.

¹⁷³ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

¹⁷⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

¹⁷⁵ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

¹⁷⁶ Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 74. Of course, Wilmore may well have given Forman more advice than acknowledged here. Perhaps he had forgotten about such advice, or he declined to acknowledge it either because of strategic considerations or modesty.

¹⁷⁷ "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here." This news article did not identify the church as predominantly black, but it did say that Wilmore addressed "a largely Negro audience."

Wilmore was close friends with Clarence L. Cave who was pastor of Faith Presbyterian Church in Germantown from 1950 to 1963, a church which has since closed. This church may have been Faith Presbyterian but under a later name. Clarence L. Cave, J. Oscar McCloud, and Robert T. Newbold, Jr., "The Witness of a Prophet" (*Church & Society*, November/December 1987, pp. 47-59, accessed August 22, 2019, <http://justiceunbound.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/on-Edler-Hawkins-1987.pdf>), p. 47; Betsi Moise, "Grace Jenkintown Welcomes Members from First African Presbyterian Church," *Presbytery of Philadelphia*, February 1, 2018, accessed August 22, 2019, <https://presbyphl.org/grace-jenkintown-welcomes-members-first-african-presbyterian-church/>.

¹⁷⁸ "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here."

¹⁷⁹ Note also that this source refers to it as a "sermon," rather than, in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, a speech before an "audience." Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160. Calhoun is quoting from "Gayraud Wilmore, Unpublished Sermon, Germantown Community Church, Germantown, Pennsylvania, May 4, 1969. Papers of Malcolm Calhoun." Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 284, (note 21).

¹⁸⁰ "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here."

¹⁸¹ "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here."

¹⁸² This article also noted that the Rev. David B. Park, of the Unitarian Church of Germantown, also defended Forman on the same day, saying, among other things, that "the person who invades a church to give voice to his conviction 'may possess a more compelling message than the minister himself on a given Sunday and should be heard.'" "Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here."

¹⁸³ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 65; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 21, 159.

¹⁸⁴ George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 11.

¹⁸⁵ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66.

¹⁸⁶ The occupation ended on May 22. On that day a different group also occupied United Methodist missions offices in the same building for eight hours. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 159-161.

¹⁸⁷ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 65.

-
- 188 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 159.
- 189 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66.
- 190 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66.
- 191 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 66. Miracle's source for this is a 1985 interview with Kenneth Neigh.
- 192 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 66-67.
- 193 Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 65.
- 194 Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]." McCormick Theological Seminary was also under occupation at this time by a Hispanic American organization. Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio."
- 195 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 55.
- 196 Jack L. Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 25, June 18, 1969, pp. 855-856), p. 855.
- 197 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 67.
- 198 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 68.
- 199 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 68.
- 200 George also reported that "Forman was on the telephone calling people on the floor of the Assembly from the [BNM] General Secretary's office in New York City." If true, this must have occurred either before or after Forman traveled to San Antonio to address the Assembly. George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 11. This "schismatic revivalist" was Carl C. McIntire, Jr.
- 201 Jorge Lara-Braud, "Hispanic-Americans and the Crisis in the Nation," 1969, in William Yoo, ed., *The Presbyterian Experience in the United States: A Sourcebook* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, pp. 155-162), p. 158; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 68.
- 202 Lara-Braud, "Hispanic-Americans and the Crisis in the Nation," p. 158.
- 203 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 68.
- 204 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 68.
- 205 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 69.
- 206 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 69.
- 207 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 69.
- 208 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 70.
- 209 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 70.
- 210 Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio," p. 855.
- 211 Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio," p. 855.
- 212 Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio," p. 855.
- 213 Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio," p. 856.
- 214 Stotts, "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio," p. 856.
- 215 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 71.
- 216 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 71.
- 217 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 71.
- 218 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 73.
- 219 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 72, drawing from 1985 interview with Kenneth Neigh.
- 220 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 67.
- "They were Forman's people. Some of them were Forman's people. They were brought to San Antonio by a communique that went out from James Forman.... But many of them were not under his authority, they belonged to other kinds of revolutionary groups that were.... I think these people belonged to a little offshoot or rival offshoot of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee that was being courted by Castro, and by the Cuban Revolution at the time." Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- 221 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 67; Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- 222 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 67; Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- 223 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 67; Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."

-
- 224 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 72; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 160.
- 225 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 72.
- 226 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 72.
- 227 John R. Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), p. 36.
- 228 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 229 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 230 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 72.
- 231 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 73.
- 232 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 74.
- 233 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 160; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 74.
- 234 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 74-75; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 24.
- 235 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 24; *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, Seventh Series, Vol. IV, 1970, Part I: Journal, One Hundred and Eighty-Second General Assembly, Chicago, Illinois (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Office of the General Assembly, August, 1970), pp. 660-662.
- 236 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 75.
- 237 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 77.
- 238 *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, Seventh Series, Vol. III, 1969, Part I: Journal, One Hundred and Eighty-First General Assembly, San Antonio, Texas (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Office of the General Assembly, August, 1969), pp. 678-679.
- 239 *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 679.
- 240 *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 679.
- 241 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 75-76.
- 242 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 77-78.
- 243 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 78.
- 244 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 78.
- 245 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 78.
- 246 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 78.
- 247 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 79-80.
- 248 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 79. Miracle referred to the source of this statement as "an unnamed BEDC leader" quoted in the *Presbyterian Outlook* (June 6, 1969, p. 3).
- 249 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 82-83.
- 250 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 232 (note 58), 208.
- 251 Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto* (New York: United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1969), pp. 13, 18; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 210; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 240-241.
- 252 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 208.

²⁵³ “The statement which he has written is *not* a proposal for policy or program, nor is it, in any way, a statement of policy or program. It is, rather, a statement that should inform us as we struggle together to find our common understanding and faithfulness and out of which policy and program will grow. In light of the challenge before us all to comprehend fully and to act faithfully, and in the light of the content of the Occasional Paper of the Division of Evangelism which is now ready for mailing, I have asked that this statement by Dr. Wilmore be included in the mailing.” David Ramage, “A Forward,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., *The Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto* (New York: United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1969), pp. 2-3.

An excerpt of Wilmore’s essay was later published under a different title, in *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, and in a publication of the CME Church. At that time, Wilmore referred to the essay as “a theological addendum to the Black Manifesto”; “it was not consciously planned as such, but that is what it is.” Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, pp. 73-74; “A Black Churchman’s Response to the Black Manifesto,” in Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979), pp. 93-99).

See also Gayraud Wilmore, “Reparations: Don’t Hang Up on a Word” (*Theology Today* 26, No. 3, October 1969, pp. 105-106).

²⁵⁴ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 18. In December 1963, Wilmore had used similar language in describing Malcolm X, saying of X’s appeal to working class African Americans, he “in razor-sharp, bloodless terms, has spoken... the only truth their life experiences is able to authenticate.” Wilmore, Jr., “The Negro Revolt,” p. 10.

²⁵⁵ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 18.

²⁵⁶ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 13; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 210.

²⁵⁷ He also pointed out that Ernest Campbell had endorsed the principle of reparations as a necessary part of repentance. Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 6.

²⁵⁸ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 6.

²⁵⁹ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 240-241.

²⁶⁰ The Manifesto itself referred to “prophets,” but not in the same sense. “We call upon all white Christians and Jews... The true test of their faith and belief in the Cross and the words of the prophets will certainly be put to the test as we seek legitimate and extremely modest reparations...” “The Black Manifesto,” p. 86.

²⁶¹ “Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here”; Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160, quoting from “Gayraud Wilmore, Unpublished Sermon, Germantown Community Church, Germantown, Pennsylvania, May 4, 1969. Papers of Malcolm Calhoun,” Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 284 (note 21).

²⁶² Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 237-238.

Many years later, Wilmore similarly wrote, “Of course we knew that our church could not be coerced by angry threats from bearded, pipe-smoking prophets...” Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65.

²⁶³ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 7.

The phrase, “this is not the first time that God has called upon the wrath of those outside of the church to summon it to repentance and obedience,” may refer to Assyrian and Babylonian attacks on the Hebrews, which the biblical prophets sometimes refer to as punishment for the Hebrews’ sins. See, for example, Jeremiah 5:19. Similarly, Wilmore also wrote, “In the tenor of prophetic Christianity, I have sought to appeal to the faith that says the judgment of God begins in his own household - often by the witness of those who do not claim to know Him - and that such judgment also points to the perennial revolution of the coming Kingdom of God by which the whole of mankind is saved.” Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 18.

²⁶⁴ The “cleansing of the temple” occurs in Matthew 21:12-17, Mark 11:15-19, Luke 19:45-48, and John 2:13-16.

²⁶⁵ Wilmore, Jr., *Church’s Response to the Black Manifesto*, pp. 7-8.

The reference to those “who cry ‘peace! peace! when there is no peace’” comes from Jeremiah 8:11.

²⁶⁶ Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*, p. 189.

- 267 Wilmore, Jr., *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 12.
- 268 Wilmore, Jr., *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 12.
- 269 Wilmore, Jr., *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 12.
- The triumphal entry occurs in Matthew 21:1-11, Mark 11:1-11, Luke 19:28-44, and John 12:12-19.
- 270 Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 237-238.
- 271 Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 237-238.
- 272 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 214, 232 (note 58).
- 273 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 214.
- 274 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 214.
- 275 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 215.
- 276 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 215.
- 277 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 232 (note 58).
- 278 Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]." Similarly, Amy Miracle, drawing on 1985 interviews with Wilmore and Oscar McCloud, wrote that Wilmore and McCloud "agree that the 1969 General Assembly produced action that black Presbyterians had been advocating for years. When they pushed for change in the traditional Presbyterian style of committees and slow bureaucracy, black Presbyterians received 'excuses and red tape.' Forman and the Black Manifesto helped the Church recognize the radical nature of black feelings toward white denominations and inspired the UPCUSA to make an appropriate response." Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 79.
- 279 Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 75.
- 280 Wilmore and Cone, *Black Theology*, p. 73.
- 281 Ramage was Executive Secretary of the General Department of Mission Strategy and Evangelism, within the BNM. Ramage, "A Forward," pp. 1, 3.
- 282 Ramage, "A Forward," p. 1.
- 283 Ramage, "A Forward," p. 1.
- 284 Ramage, "A Forward," p. 1.
- 285 Ramage, "A Forward," p. 2.
- 286 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, Vol. 110, 1970, Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, June 14-19, 1970 (Richmond, Virginia: General Assembly Publications, 1970), p. 130.
- 287 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, pp. 126-127.
- 288 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, p. 127.
- 289 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, p. 127.
- 290 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, p. 128.
- 291 *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, p. 129.
- 292 Harold Edward Fey, "Without Strings" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 40, October 1, 1969, pp. 1239-1240), p. 1240.
- 293 Fey, "Without Strings," p. 1240.
- 294 Fey, "Without Strings," p. 1240.
- 295 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 35-36.
- 296 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 35.
- 297 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 298 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 299 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 134-135.
- 300 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 134-135.
- 301 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 135-136.

- 302 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160.
- 303 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 162.
- 304 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160.
- 305 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 160-161.
- 306 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 161; Wilmore, Jr., *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 19 (Bibliography).
- 307 Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, pp. 162-163.
- 308 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 202.
- 309 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, pp. 202-203.
- 310 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 157.
- 311 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 65; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 137; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 203.
- 312 Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 137; Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, p. 127.
- 313 Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, p. 137; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 203.
- 314 Lecky, *Black Manifesto*, pp. 22, 130-131.
- 315 Ernest T. Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," *The Riverside Preachers*, ed. Stephen H. Phelps (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2012), pp. 130-131; Luke 19:1-10. Perhaps the first to connect this story with reparations was the NCBC, in its June 13, 1969 statement in support of Black Theology and the Black Manifesto, released one month before Campbell's sermon. In it the NCBC said, "reparation is a part of the Gospel message. Zaccheus [sic] knew well the necessity for repayment as an essential ingredient in repentance. 'If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold' (Luke 19:8)." "Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969," p. 101.
- The PC (US) also referenced Zacchaeus in its 1970 endorsement of reparations, again in order to say that repentance requires justice. The statement said, "Insofar as the demand for reparations symbolizes need on our part for repentance, it is a helpful word to the church. We do have particular obligations to those whom we have treated unjustly and from whose oppression we benefit. The cry of the penitent man is, '... if I have defrauded any one [sic] of anything, I restore it fourfold.'" *Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*, p. 128.
- More recently, Mark Lomax, member of the Presbyterian Church (USA) Task Force to Study Reparations, in a 2004 essay in the official denominational women's magazine, used the Zacchaeus story to promote reparations. Mark Lomax, "Reparations: Getting to the Ground Level" (*Horizons* 17, No. 7, December 2004, pp. 19, 21; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*, pp. 205-207.
- 316 Luke 19:1-10.
- 317 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," p. 131.
- 318 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," pp. 131-132.
- 319 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," p. 132.
- 320 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," p. 134.
- 321 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," pp. 132-133, 136.
- 322 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," p. 136.
- 323 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," pp. 136-137; 2 Corinthians 5:19.
- 324 Campbell, "The Case for Reparations," p. 131; Exodus 22:1.
- 325 Paris, *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*, p. 87.
- 326 Ernest T. Campbell, "An Open Letter to Billy Graham," *The Riverside Preachers*, ed. Stephen H. Phelps (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2012), pp. 138, 140. For the prophet Micaiah son of Imlah, not to be confused with the prophet Micah (of the book of Micah), see 1 Kings 22.
- 327 Campbell, "An Open Letter to Billy Graham," p. 144.
- 328 "Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto" (*The Christian Century* 86, No. 40, October 1, 1969, p. 1241).
- 329 "Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto."
- 330 "Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto."
- 331 Al Haas, "Dr. McIntire Stands in the Rain to Answer 'Manifesto,'" *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 21, 1969, accessed April 28, 2016, <http://www.carlmcintire.org/newspapers-inquirer-690721.php>.

332 “Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto”; Haas, “Dr. McIntire Stands in the Rain to Answer ‘Manifesto.’”

333 “Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto.”

334 “Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto.”

335 “Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto.”

336 Ernest T. Campbell, *Christian Manifesto* (New York, Harper & Row, 1970), pp. ix-x.

337 Campbell, *Christian Manifesto*, p. 96.

338 See Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers*.

339 See Lecky, *Black Manifesto*; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*; Harvey, *Dear White Christians*; and Shattuck, *Episcopalians and Race*.

340 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 12.

341 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 84-85.

342 Wilmore, “Recollections,” pp. 65-66.

343 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 12.

344 PEDCO was initially the “Protestant Economic Development Corporation,” because the UPCUSA hoped, in vain, that other denominations would also participate. Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 44.

345 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 12; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

According to Miracle, the church required “that 30% of funds available for investment among the major missions of the Church were to be used for investment in business and housing in low and middle income areas. Investments were to be made regardless of high levels of risk and low rate of return.” Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 44-45.

346 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 12.

347 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 12.

348 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 45. See George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 13 for a longer list of loan recipients.

349 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 13.

350 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” pp. 12-13.

351 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 85.

352 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 85.

353 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 85.

354 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 85-86.

355 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 86; George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 13; Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

356 George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 14.

357 As of 1998, SDOP had disbursed almost \$30 million. George, “A Firebell in the Night,” pp. 13-14.

Information on SDOP’s annual funding is available on its website, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/sdop/>. The 1971 Assembly approved the creation of the annual One Great Hour of Sharing offering, in order to create a sustainable annual funding source for SDOP. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ’s Name?*, pp. 164, 255.

358 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 87.

CHAPTER 6

THE END OF AN ERA: DEFENDING ANGELA DAVIS AND LEAVING CORAR

On August 7, 1970, one year after the crisis over the Black Manifesto, a shootout took place at the Marin County Courthouse in California, resulting in the deaths of a judge and three other people. Later that year, scholar and racial justice activist Angela Y. Davis was arrested and charged with kidnapping and murder as a result of her alleged involvement in the incident.¹ In December 1970, local black Presbyterians, observing conditions at the same Marin County Courthouse where she now being held to await trial, became concerned that she would not receive a fair trial. Those Presbyterians appealed to their denomination's Council on Church and Race (COCAR), which then in 1971 donated \$10,000 to Davis' legal defense.² COCAR made this grant from a third fund which, with the National Committee on the Self-Development of People (SDOP) and (in a sense) the Presbyterian Economic Development Corporation (PEDCO), the United Presbyterian Church had created to promote racial justice as a result of events surrounding the Black Manifesto. This third fund, established, like SDOP, by the 1970 General Assembly, was called the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid (EFLA), and was designed to provide legal aid for racial justice activists ensnared in the criminal justice system.³

Angela Davis was eventually acquitted. However, despite strong support by many black Presbyterians for COCAR's action, the backlash among white Presbyterians to what some saw as an endorsement of a black extremist, was immense, creating a major controversy in the denomination.⁴ UPCUSA offices received ten thousand letters in response to the Davis grant, constituting six cubic feet, almost all of them negative and authored by white Presbyterians.⁵

This incident led to the censure of COCAR, the curtailment of its funding and autonomy, a reduction in the denomination's formal involvement in racial justice activism, and, less directly, to the decentralization of the denominational governing structure.⁶ It also led to the end of Gayraud S. Wilmore's fourteen years of racial and social justice work within the structure of the UPCUSA (interrupted by three years in the academy), and, essentially, to a career change, to spend the next two decades as a professor, writing and teaching in the field of black church studies and theological education in four different academic institutions.

Wilmore was not involved in the details of making the Davis grant. However, he was involved in the response to the grant, and the event as a whole reflected the efforts of black Presbyterians to push the denomination to the radical edge of social justice, and to gain the ability for leaders of color to act without white oversight. While Wilmore and other black Presbyterians were proud of their witness for justice, they were also dismayed by the harshly negative reaction of white Presbyterians.

Background for Davis' Arrest and Trial

In May 1970, in addition to creating SDOP and reviewing the church's other efforts and payments in response to the Manifesto, the General Assembly, meeting in Chicago, also created a \$100,000 Emergency Fund for Legal Aid, to be administered by COCAR, without (white) oversight.⁷ This fund, somewhat inspired by the Black Manifesto but specifically necessitated by concerns about the persecution of the Black Panthers, was designed to provide legal aid for racial justice activists facing criminal prosecution, given the denomination's recognition of the justice

system's white supremacist and classist tendencies.⁸ The Assembly authorized this new fund because,

Equal justice is an inalienable right of every citizen of the United States... Equal justice is too frequently equated with dollar value... Our poor brothers and sisters are not always treated as innocent until proven guilty because of lack of money for bail bonds, and in many cases, inadequate legal representation.⁹

That year, COCAR approved \$66,435 in spending via this fund. Among the last such grants made prior to the convening of the 1971 Assembly was a grant to the Marin County Black Defense Fund, provided for the legal defense of African American activist, UCLA professor, and communist Angela Davis.¹⁰

Angela Yvonne Davis was born and grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, in the midst of the Civil Rights struggle in that city.¹¹ She moved to Brooklyn in 1959 to attend a progressive, desegregated high school, and in that context she became interested in socialist and communist thought.¹² She continued to pursue those interests through international travel as well as through collegiate study at Brandeis University, from which she graduated in 1965.¹³ Doctoral study in philosophy took her to Frankfurt, Germany from 1965 to 1967.¹⁴ Frustrated at being so far away from the movement for Black Power in the United States, she transferred to the University of California at San Diego in 1967.¹⁵ There she was involved in student protests of the Vietnam War, and co-founded UCSD's Black Student Council, through which she also worked with the San Diego Black Conference, a "grassroots offshoot" of the US organization of Maulana Karenga.¹⁶ Karenga was the Los Angeles-based black nationalist (and Kwanzaa founder) who had made profound impression on Gayraud Wilmore at the 1967 Black Power Conference in Newark. In San Diego Angela Davis also developed connections to the Communist Party, USA,

the Black Panther Political Party (BPPP), and, through James Forman, SNCC, especially appreciating the ways each of those organizations fused concerns about both racial and economic justice.¹⁷ Of these three groups, in January 1968 she initially joined only the BPPP, in part because of its relative openness to women in leadership, unlike other activist organizations at the time.¹⁸ She joined the Communist Party, USA in July 1968.¹⁹ At James Forman's urging, the BPPP soon became a West Coast chapter of SNCC, partly to avoid a dispute over the "Black Panther" name with the more well-known Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, later known simply as the Black Panther Party (BPP).²⁰ This decision resulted in collaboration between the latter, Bay Area-based BPP organization, associated with Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, and this new "L.A. SNCC" chapter.²¹ By the end of the year, Davis left L.A. SNCC to join the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), because of growing sexism in the mostly male local leadership of the former organization, and growing anti-communism in the national leadership of SNCC.²² In 1969, Davis moved from San Diego to Los Angeles and joined the UCLA faculty, at which point she began to become a nationally-known figure.²³ In the summer of 1969, between her appointment and the start of her classes, her appointment came under fire in the press, including by California Governor Ronald Reagan, because of her communism and other radical involvements - the state university system had an arcane regulation still on the books banning the hire of communists.²⁴ Fired by the Board of Regents, she was later reinstated to her position by an appeals court, and began teaching in October 1969.²⁵

In January 1970, at Soledad State Prison in Monterey County, a guard named O.G. Miller fired into the prison yard from his position in a guard tower, killing three imprisoned black men.²⁶ Shortly after the Monterey County Grand Jury's ruling of the killing as a "justifiable

homicide” was broadcast on the prison radio, a white guard, John V. Mills, was beaten and killed.²⁷ In February, another grand jury indicted three imprisoned men, George Jackson, John Clutchette, and Fleeta Drumgo, for the murder of Mills.²⁸ Angela Davis soon became involved in the campaign to “Free the Soledad Brothers,” and served as co-chairperson of the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee in Southern California.²⁹ Davis became closely connected to defendant George Jackson and his family, as Jackson and Davis corresponded regularly that spring.³⁰ Jackson and Davis fell in love in the spring or summer of 1970.³¹

In May, George Jackson, concerned about the emotional state of his younger brother, Jonathan Jackson, had asked that Davis provide a constructive outlet by getting Jonathan involved in the work of the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee.³² Davis agreed, and Jonathan then “spent a great deal of time with Davis at rallies and publicity events” that summer.³³ That June, the Board of Regents decided not to renew Davis’ teaching contract because of her public support for the Soledad Brothers.³⁴

On August 7, 1970, a different defendant, James McClain, who had been incarcerated at San Quentin State Prison, was on trial in the Marin County Courthouse for attempting to assault a prison guard.³⁵ During the trial, Jonathan Jackson, “heavily armed,” quietly entered the courtroom and sat among the other onlookers.³⁶ Eventually, Jackson rose, took over the courtroom, and began to orchestrate the escape of McClain and two other inmates present as witnesses.³⁷ According to Deborah Mullen,

Jackson took over the courtroom, armed the three inmates McClain, Ruchell Magee, and William Christmas, took five hostages (the judge [Harold Haley], the prosecutor [Gary Thomas], and three women [jurors]), and left the building headed for the Civic Center parking lot adjacent to the courthouse where a van was parked. Jackson loaded everyone into the van and proceeded to drive it toward a roadblock that had been erected by

sheriff's deputies. When he stopped the van, prison guards from San Quentin fired on it, killing Jackson, McClain, Christmas, Judge Harold Haley, also wounding Magee, the prosecutor and one of the women jurors. Several of the guns Jackson used on that day were legally registered to Angela Davis.³⁸

Authorities soon began investigating possible connections between the Soledad Brothers Defense Committee - especially Davis herself - and this incident.³⁹ Davis, who reported having learned of the courthouse violence via the evening television news, went into hiding on August 9, had a warrant issued for her arrest on August 14, and then then spent two months on the run, most of it on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted" list, traveling to Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Miami before her eventual arrest in a motel back in New York City on October 13.⁴⁰ She was charged with kidnapping and the first degree murder of Judge Haley (and, later, conspiracy), based on the belief that she and Jonathan Jackson had worked together beforehand to plan the freeing of the imprisoned men from the courthouse.⁴¹ After losing a two-month fight against extradition to California, she was transferred in December to the Marin County Jail, where she was held without bail until February 23, 1972.⁴² Her sixteen-month imprisonment came to an end largely as a result of a massive nationwide campaign in support of her bail and legal defense.⁴³

United Presbyterians' Intervention in the Davis Case

The UPCUSA - specifically COCAR - was among those groups involved in the campaign for legal aid for Angela Davis. At this point, COCAR's five staff members were Gayraud Wilmore as chairman (of the staff), J. Oscar McCloud as associate chairman for operations, Wilbur K. Cox as associate chairman, Roger Granados as consultant, and Margaret "Maggie" Kuhn, as coordinator of administration.⁴⁴ Kuhn, from the old Philadelphia days of Social

Education and Action, spent the year 1970 unsuccessfully fighting her mandatory age-65 retirement (effective December 1970) and, as a result, founding the anti-ageist Gray Panthers. In May 1970 the General Assembly had established a \$100,000 Emergency Fund for Legal Aid, to be overseen by COCAR's staff.⁴⁵ This proposal had arisen in March 1970 amid concerns about the legal situation of Black Panthers who had been jailed in New York City.⁴⁶ A white Presbyterian minister, Charles Yerkes, who had been acting informally as a chaplain to these Panthers, had pointed out that the average bail for such individuals was \$100,000.⁴⁷ The fund's first grant, in July 1970, was for \$25,000 for bail and other legal aid for one of these Black Panthers, at the request of Yerkes and of Robert Pierre Johnson, General Presbyter of the Presbytery of New York City and longtime member of former Council of the North and West.⁴⁸ COCAR made fourteen other payments from the fund between September 1970 and March 1971, in response to "requests from local and regional judicatories and community organizations."⁴⁹ By far the two largest grants of these fourteen were a \$15,000 grant in April 1971 to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund of the Southeast for individuals facing charges related to their efforts to desegregate Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Schools, and a \$10,000 payment to the Marin County Black Defense Fund, for the legal defense of Davis, at the request of the Office of Ethnic Church Affairs (OECA) of the San Francisco-based Synod of the Golden Gate.⁵⁰

In October 1970, COCAR announced the criteria it was using to evaluate grants, including that "funds will be used for legal aid purposes in relation to racial and cultural justice," "for those who are without the normal means of bail," and that "priority will be given to the use of funds in concert with others where such participation has a multiplying effect."⁵¹ On December 22 - the day of Davis' extradition from New York to California - St. Andrew United

Presbyterian Church in Marin City released a statement on the Davis trial.⁵² In the statement, the church stated its “concern over the prosecution of Miss Davis and its possible effects on race relations in our county and state.”⁵³ It asked public officials to provide a fair trial for Davis, to ensure “that her prosecution is confined only to matters directly relevant to her guilt or innocence of the charges against her,” and “to refrain from any acts or statements which would link this prosecution in any way with Miss Davis’ or others’ political or social beliefs, statements, associations, or peaceful activities in support of the rights and dignity of black people.”⁵⁴ It also asked that officials “refrain from imposing security measures which offend personal dignity, unduly infringe individual liberties... and to make sure that any necessary security measures which are imposed are applied equally to all persons,” and to “act with increased vigilance and determination to assure to persons of all races that they shall receive equal treatment” in the justice system.”⁵⁵ OECA received the church’s statement and provided copies to committee members for its January 6, 1971 meeting, but seems not to have discussed this issue at that meeting.⁵⁶

Eugene G. Turner provided further details about the exact starting point for the grant, among the black Presbyterians of Marin City. According to Turner,

This grant request originated around a prayer table in Marin City at the Marin City [St. Andrew United] Presbyterian Church. Mrs. Inyce Bailey worked at the Marin County Court House where Angela was held in jail. The Black people going in and out of the building were greatly harassed by the officials because they believed someone would come and help AD break out of jail to escape the police. Inyce introduced the idea at prayer time during worship of helping the Black folks who were being treated unfairly at the Court House. Inyce brought this prayer discussion to the Office of Racial Ethnic Affairs (committee) seeking its help. Sometime between those meetings, I received a call from Oscar McCloud, asking if we knew about the COCAR Legal Defense Fund. [OECA] agreed to make a request from the COCAR Defense Fund.⁵⁷

Bailey was a member of OECA. Deborah Mullen describes OECA as “the nerve center for [the] Synod’s mission programs and outreach to minorities” in northern California.⁵⁸ Its mission was to serve and advocate for “ethnic minority peoples” and “the poor and oppressed.”⁵⁹ OECA consisted of fifteen members, including ministers as well as laypeople, and at least four Hispanic Americans, four Asian Americans, and four black Americans, and was directed by the Rev. Eugene G. Turner.⁶⁰ Turner had been one of Gayraud Wilmore’s only black students a decade previously, at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. On February 3, OECA held its next meeting, at which it did discuss the statement by St. Andrew United Presbyterian.⁶¹ Leo Hatton, Secretary for Ethnic Affairs with the New York Office of Church Support and liaison with COCAR, had attended OECA’s meeting, at which he had informed the committee that COCAR wanted OECA’s recommendation on the matter.⁶² OECA responded by endorsing the St. Andrew request and forwarding it on to COCAR.⁶³ It also added, via a letter from Turner to Hatton, its recommendation that COCAR use the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid for Davis’ defense.⁶⁴

The National Race Staff consisted of denominational staffers focused on racial issues in different boards and agencies, including the Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations (COEMAR), the Board of Christian Education (BCE), and the Board of National Missions (BNM - which included COCAR).⁶⁵ Gayraud Wilmore, Oscar McCloud, Leo Hatton, Wilbur Cox, and Clarence Cave were among those in attendance.⁶⁶ At this meeting, Hatton made a verbal report on OECA’s request, likely because Oscar McCloud’s letter had not yet arrived.⁶⁷ Hatton was unable to answer some of the National Race Staff’s questions about the requests, thus necessitating clarification of such items via letters and phone calls between Eugene Turner and Oscar McCloud.⁶⁸ The National Race Staff was seeking to discern the propriety of the use of the

Emergency Fund for Legal Aid in this case.⁶⁹ COCAR held its semi-annual meeting on February 17-18, at which it reviewed the statement from St. Andrew Church, and made a decision to “adopt the statement as our own.”⁷⁰ At the same meeting, Wilmore reported on a National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) and Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) gathering planned for April 26, the second anniversary of the unveiling of the Black Manifesto.⁷¹ Black Presbyterians United (BPU) also endorsed the St. Andrew Church statement at its annual meeting, held February 27-28.⁷² On March 10, the COCAR staff met, considered the positions taken by St. Andrew Church, OECA, COCAR, and BPU, and decided to approve a \$10,000 grant from the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid for Davis’ defense.⁷³ The BNM submitted the paperwork on March 12, and cut the check on March 15.⁷⁴ Also on March 15, *Presbyterian Life*, a magazine with a circulation of more than 600,000, reported on COCAR’s previous statement of agreement with the plea of St. Andrew Church.⁷⁵

Technically, COCAR had skipped a step. While it was indeed responding to the request of St. Andrew Church, and financial support for Davis’ legal defense was in the spirit of that request, this local church had never actually requested a grant from the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid for this purpose - Presbyterian polity required that such requests be initiated at the local level.⁷⁶ On March 22, Oscar McCloud called Eugene Turner to inform him that COCAR had decided to make the grant.⁷⁷ McCloud also asked for a letter from Turner, speaking for OECA, making a formal request for the funds.⁷⁸ Turner complied.⁷⁹ The check arrived at the office of the Synod of the Golden Gate on approximately March 25. On April 1, Turner wrote to McCloud to thank COCAR for the grant, assure him that it would be used only for Davis’ legal defense, and to express his amazement - which he had also expressed verbally to Synod

Executive J. Davis Illingworth - at the size of the grant.⁸⁰ Turner, OECA's staff executive director, and Hannibal Williams, OECA's chairman, next sought a meeting with Davis' representatives to ensure that the grant was only used for her legal defense, but were unable to schedule such a meeting in April.⁸¹ COCAR's executive committee met on April 13, and expressed their approval of the grant after "extensive discussion," despite the fact that, via COCAR's staff, the check had already been sent to OECA.⁸² It appears that this was not an out-of-order step. The staff had the authority to approve the grant, but COCAR had the ability to respond positively or negatively to the staff's decision after the fact.

Later that month, Gayraud Wilmore's attention was turned to the spring convocation of the NCBC, which began on April 20 in Cairo, Illinois.⁸³ Metz Rollins still served as executive director of the NCBC at this time.⁸⁴ Cairo was chosen because of the work for racial justice in that community, led by Charles Koen, which was informed by Black power and Black Theology.⁸⁵ Representatives from nearly every major U.S. Christian denomination were present, as were the leaders of myriad church-based black caucuses and racial justice agencies.⁸⁶ On April 22, Wilmore and Rollins participated in a dialogue with Father Robert C. Chapman who was executive director of the NCC's Department of Social Justice, and the Rev. Blaine Ramsey, Jr. who was executive director of the Illinois Council of Churches and a former Cairo pastor.⁸⁷ This meeting resulted in commitments by those present to provide further funds and other support to racial justice work in Cairo.⁸⁸

The Synod of the Golden Gate met on May 8, but OECA and Synod staff chose at that time not to report the Davis grant, for two reasons.⁸⁹ Technically, the grant came from the BNM, not the Synod, and Turner and Williams had also not yet been able to meet with Davis'

representatives in order to give them the check and discuss the limits on the use of the funds.⁹⁰ On May 14, Turner finally was able to hold this meeting. In attendance were, among others, Turner and Williams, as well as Ellis Sheppard, West Coast Treasurer of the Angela Davis Defense Fund, and Davis attorney Sheldon Otis.⁹¹ Davis' representatives presented church officials with an estimate of the range of likely costs of Davis' defense, between \$250,000 and \$500,000.⁹² At that time, the fund consisted of less than \$100,000.⁹³ After agreeing that the funds would be used only for Davis' legal defense, Turner, who had converted the original check to a cashier's check on April 6, then gave this check to Ellis Sheppard, who had it deposited on May 14.⁹⁴

The General Assembly

Three days later, United Presbyterians gathered for their 183rd General Assembly, which took place May 17-26 in Rochester, New York.⁹⁵ This Assembly elected the first woman to serve as the denomination's moderator, Lois Harkrider Stair, an elder from Waukesha, Wisconsin.⁹⁶ News of the Davis grant quickly spread through the Assembly's commissioners.⁹⁷ A May 24 press release by the Synod of the Golden Gate announced the grant, and included a joint statement by Eugene Turner and Synod executive J. Davis Illingworth, saying,

The Angela Davis case is in the judgment of all involved a landmark case. Here is a person whose political views are at sharp variance with the views we, of the Church uphold, But as we interpret the use of the fund - and more basically as we interpret the gospel itself, we cannot limit our concern for justice to those with whom we agree or there is no justice for any of us. The defense of Miss Davis' views is not our cause. A strong defense of her right as a Black woman to justice and a just trial is rooted in the basic beliefs of Christian faith.⁹⁸

That day, the Standing Committee on Church and Race gave its report to the Assembly.⁹⁹ Edler Hawkins, then serving as COCAR's co-chairman, spoke on the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid.¹⁰⁰ He gave some of the background of COCAR and of the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid, and asked that the fund be continued for another three years, in order to "balance up' the scales of justice," given "that many times our Black and minority and poor brothers and sisters are not always treated as 'innocent until proven guilty.'"¹⁰¹ More than halfway through his speech, he came for the first time to the question of Angela Davis.¹⁰² According to Deborah Mullen, "there was no one more credible," "no one whose integrity was more untarnished" than Hawkins.¹⁰³

According to Gayraud Wilmore,

As usual, Edler's approach was the soul of moderation, but no one at the Assembly could mistake his gentility for the lack of will to keep the Assembly supportive of the mandate it had given for its racial justice agency to represent the United Presbyterian Church on the cutting edge of the civil rights movement.¹⁰⁴

Hawkins thoroughly explained how COCAR had acted in accordance with its mandate, and added that its actions were necessitated by the fact that, historically, "to be a Black Woman, has meant double trouble."¹⁰⁵ He also sought to clarify that the sole reason for the grant was because Davis was a black woman, and therefore vulnerable to the racism and sexism of the justice system, and that COCAR did not mean to endorse Davis' views or affiliations, communist or otherwise.¹⁰⁶

On the following day, the Assembly considered the report of the Standing Committee on Church and Race, which included the recommended continuance of the fund for an additional three years.¹⁰⁷ In reviewing this report, the Assembly engaged in a lengthy debate over a motion to amend the report to state a recommendation, "That the 183rd General Assembly (1971)

communicate to the Council on Church and Race its serious questions concerning the propriety of allocating \$10,000 to the Marin County Black Defense Fund.”¹⁰⁸ Commissioners objected to giving the grant to a communist, particularly, in the words of one, “since there are hundreds of thousands in this country who need this help.”¹⁰⁹ Many sought cancellation of the fund and punishment of COCAR staffers for their allegedly improper administration of it.¹¹⁰ Most black Presbyterians supported the fund, and, according to Eugene Turner, “raised their voices in alarm over what they regarded as a racist rejection of a critically important tool of Black liberation by White Presbyterians.”¹¹¹ Black commissioners said they were “tired of having a price tag put on our humanity,” and expressed solidarity with Davis as a symbol of all black people.

The church is in this case because injustice is there. When Angela Davis takes the stand all of us who are black are there. She may very well be guilty. We simply want American citizens guaranteed justice.¹¹²

As a result of this debate, the Assembly required that COCAR provide clear annual reports of its grants, and it required COCAR to respond to “the plight of white ethnics in America.”¹¹³ The Assembly also narrowly defeated motions to eliminate or place further restrictions on the Fund, or to deny any further aid to Davis from the fund.¹¹⁴ According to Eugene Turner, James H. Robinson was the primary voice in support of COCAR in the Assembly’s floor debate.¹¹⁵

There were all kinds of accusations flowing through the General Assembly. Had it not been for the excellent floor maneuvering of [Robinson], the General Assembly would have chastised COCAR. [Robinson] carried the floor debate and simply outmaneuvered the rest including the Moderator, Lois Stair.”¹¹⁶

Edler G. Hawkins and James H. Robinson, perhaps the two most well-known and admired black Presbyterian pastors since the 1950s days of the Council of the North and West, both of whom began their pastorates in the same time and fashion in which Wilmore’s own McDowell Church

had been founded, rode to the rescue once again. They had led the efforts to create CORAR a decade earlier, and now they led the effort to prevent its dissolution. This was perhaps the last time that, together, they were able to use their skills and reputations for black advancement in such a crisis - Robinson died eighteen months later, and Hawkins six years later. Wilmore also credited Stated Clerk William Thompson, “a highly respected trial attorney,” with “strong support” by blocking “amendments that would have slapped down the Council and its staff.”¹¹⁷

The motion which was the most “controversial and potentially explosive,” and which had inspired the most heated discussion, stated, “That the 183rd General Assembly communicate to COCAR its serious questions concerning the propriety of allocating \$10,000 to the Marin County Black Defense Fund.”¹¹⁸ This motion eventually passed by a vote of 347 to 304.¹¹⁹ Late that night, at 12:35 am (EDT) on May 26, the Assembly approved the Committee’s full report, as amended, including a continuation of the fund for an additional three years, funded at \$100,000 per year.¹²⁰ Eugene Turner’s response to this result was mixed. He characterized the Assembly as having “cleared the Council and its staff of acting... contrary to the policies and purposes of the fund.”¹²¹ He noted that despite efforts to cast aspersions on the process, the Assembly had found that COCAR, for the most part, had done its job.

The process was squeaky clean, thus the investigation into the grant found nothing out of order, though many at the time thought it had been something done under the table in exception to standard procedures.¹²²

However, he felt that the Assembly “did not act in good faith,” in making an official criticism of COCAR despite COCAR having essentially followed the rules.¹²³ Gayraud Wilmore also had mixed feelings about this result.

There [in the Davis incident] I feel our [the denomination's] performance was not nearly as commendable as it may have been in 1969 [in response to the Black Manifesto]. I think our church reacted hysterically to the situation having to do with Angela Davis. I think there was enough evidence abroad that there was some question whether she could get a fair trial, that intelligent people could make a contribution to her defense without being apologetic about it. And I think our church overreacted.... I was a little surprised in the reaction of the Stated Clerk and heads of the boards at that period, they seemed to be terribly upset about it, I didn't think they were going to be as upset as they were. I thought they would say "well, if that's what the blacks want to do, let 'em do it." But it really embarrassed them, and they felt that they had to say something or do something that would absolve them from the implications of being just moss-backed conservatives in this situation.¹²⁴

Later on May 26, Moderator Lois Stair published "A Special Communication to Presbyterian Pastors," providing background on the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid and the Davis grant.¹²⁵ Shortly after the conclusion of the Assembly, at a meeting of executives of the national boards, General Secretary of the BCE Jim Galey and several other executives advocated that the boards send out their own letter to local churches, apologizing for the grant.¹²⁶ According to Kenneth Neigh,

As the statement went around the circle for comments, all seemed to be in favor of the paper until it got to [Stated Clerk] Bill Thompson and me. Bill said, "If you send this out, I'll have to resign." This effectively put an end to the paper.¹²⁷

The denomination's powerful, liberal, white male officials once again were willing and able to stick their necks out for racial justice and protect COCAR from recriminations. Eugene TeSelle, however, pointed out that the backlash, beginning at the Assembly and continuing throughout 1971, was exacerbated by the fact that there were no firings or other concrete consequences for COCAR. This was the case because "denominational leaders would not criticize or scapegoat the agency involved [COCAR], for the funds used were earmarked precisely for such a purpose: to redress the imbalances in the justice system between minorities and the White majority."¹²⁸

Because COCAR had acted correctly, the denomination could not punish it or its staff in order to pacify a growing movement of enraged white critics of the grant.

White Backlash

According to Eugene Turner, “it was after the General Assembly meeting that the stuff began to hit the fans.”¹²⁹ Most Presbyterians learned about the Davis grant from the secular news media, and many were embarrassed by such news coverage.¹³⁰ White United Presbyterian responses to the grant over the course of the remainder of the 1971 year were “without precedent” and “overwhelmingly negative.”¹³¹ Even by mid-June, COCAR had already received five hundred negative letters, many of which, according to BPU executive secretary Ulysses B. Blakeley, “speak of withdrawing membership, refusing to contribute monies to mission and dire threats as to the Church and their relationship to the Church,” lamenting the denomination’s spending on behalf of “that woman.”¹³²

On July 7, a church official reported that denominational offices and leaders had received more than six thousand letters, 550 of which reported decisions made by church sessions, and 112 of which reported an intent to “change... their giving pattern to General Mission.”¹³³ Many such letters promised to end a local church’s contributions or earmark them only for particular causes.¹³⁴ On August 19, the Presbyterian Office of Information reported Edler Hawkins’ announcement that COCAR had appointed a committee to propose the Council’s response to the Assembly’s decisions.¹³⁵ This news release also reported that the attention brought by the Davis grant had caused an increase in the number of grant requests received by COCAR, and that some of the denomination’s regional governing bodies were creating their own funds along the same

lines as the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid.¹³⁶ By September 9, the Stated Clerk had received 5,705 letters about the Davis grant, only 109 of which were supportive of the grant, and 1,074 of which contained the actions of church sessions.¹³⁷ 1,299 additional letters were received by Moderator Lois Stair's office in Philadelphia, of which 309 included session actions.¹³⁸ By this point, more than ten thousand total letters had been sent to church officials, and between eighty-five and ninety-nine percent of them were critical of the grant.¹³⁹ A selection from the negative letters, quoted in *Presbyterian Life*, reveals the tenor of such mail:

What on earth is happening to our Presbyterian Church?
How stupid can the Assembly Council get anyway?...

It would indicate that the United Presbyterian Church is
supporting Communists, murderers, and kidnappers....

I am sick at heart...

I've really had it...

I am furious, indignant, and ashamed - and I am seriously
considering leaving the Presbyterian church.¹⁴⁰

Another said,

We are longtime members of the Presbyterian Church. We are amazed at the action of the General Assembly donating some of our money for the defense of Angela Davis. Angela Davis, whether innocent or guilty, is a menace to the United States and to Christianity since she is an avowed communist.¹⁴¹

Others combined an aversion to communism with the argument that the funds could have been better spent elsewhere, as in the words of minister and, later, Indianapolis Mayor William Hudnut,

Is it not wiser to apply our resources to the support of those persons in our church and outside who are exercising responsible creative leadership in arriving at solutions to our problems, than to finance our own destruction, as it were, by contributing to the activity

of radical militant negativists who have declared war on our society and are deliberately advocating and conspiring for its overthrow?¹⁴²

Others expressed doubt that this grant was needed to guarantee a fair trial for Davis. One Presbyterian and judge wrote, “Our laws and constitutional provisions already give Angela Davis more legal protection than she would receive in any other country in the world.”¹⁴³

One systematic analysis of this mail, completed on September 26, reported the reasons letters gave for their objections to the grant.¹⁴⁴ The top ten categories of such reasons were, in order from the most frequently cited to the least, “Communism” (cited by 51.6% of such letters), “Other Priorities” (25.6%) “Damage to Church/Cause of Dissension,” “Angela Davis Does Not Need the Money,” “Revolutionary,” “Church Should Not Aid Enemy of U.S.,” “Church Should Not Aid its Enemies,” “U.S. System is Fair,” “Atheism,” and “Church Should not Get Involved in Political Issues.”¹⁴⁵ The study also analyzed the letters’ suggestions as to how the denomination should respond, with the most popular actions being, “Change COCAR Structure/ Personnel/Authority,” “Withhold Gifts from GAGM Funds & Agencies,” and “Designate Gifts.”¹⁴⁶ Among the few supportive letters, the most common reason by far, cited in 24.5% of such letters, was, “Concur with GA Action Questions Propriety of Allocation,” followed by “Everyone Should Have A Fair Trial/Justice,” cited by only 4.6% of such letters.¹⁴⁷ Thus even a plurality of the supportive letters actually agreed with the Assembly’s decision to chastise COCAR.

According to Gayraud Wilmore, COCAR itself had previously faced accusations of communism, as had most racial justice organizations in that era.¹⁴⁸ Some critics detected a

worrying and worsening pattern in COCAR's support for the socialist James Forman, and now the communist Davis.¹⁴⁹

...there is a group of Presbyterians who have always believed that some of the black leadership of the church was in the communist movement. They followed Edler Hawkins around, they attacked Edler on that basis. And they felt that the position that we took on the Angela Davis question confirmed their suspicions about us. So I think we were part of a witch-hunt that was going on in that period. And the people who wanted to get rid of that whole church and race crowd, and those radicals who were leading the church down the wrong path from 1964 to '71, the people who wanted to get us really came all out on the Angela Davis affair to do that, and I guess in some ways they succeeded, in a way they broke up the Council on Church and Race, in the period 1971-72, although I did not leave my job for fear of them.¹⁵⁰

Edler Hawkins, partly because of his previous nomination by the American Labor Party for New York State Assembly, faced "a lasting impression among some in the church that he was someone with communist ties," an impression which had been a major issue in his 1964 moderatorial campaign.¹⁵¹ Wilmore had reportedly faced accusations of his own communism in West Chester in 1950, perhaps because of his actual affiliation with the Young Communist League earlier in the 1930s-40s. Even before the Davis grant, during the national manhunt for the fugitive Davis in the autumn of 1970, Wilmore reported that COCAR was "suspect," saying,

I remember that one black Presbyterian missionary, back home and assigned to us, told about being called by her anxious father in the middle of the night and asked over the telephone, "Lillian, are you hiding Angela Davis?"¹⁵²

Some critics highlighted the distance between denominational officials and the apparent consensus of U.S. Presbyterian laypeople. One wrote, "I am appalled by the abysmal gap between some of the top-level church hierarchy thinking and that of the church membership, in what is supposed to be a democratic institution."¹⁵³ Another suggested that "we had better take a

good, close look at the individuals who actually voted this \$10,000.”¹⁵⁴ Another worried whether such objectionable actions had “been happening all along” in secret.¹⁵⁵

Black Presbyterian Responses to the Backlash

According to Oscar McCloud, COCAR was surprised by the backlash expressed at the Assembly and afterward.¹⁵⁶ They had expected backlash over the fund’s first grant, made in July 1970, for bail for a Black Panther facing charges in New York.¹⁵⁷ But they thought that funding a legal defense would be far less controversial than paying bail.¹⁵⁸ Despite their surprise, COCAR and its black Presbyterian allies quickly rallied the troops to defend against the backlash.

According to Gayraud Wilmore,

During the weeks following the Rochester Assembly it became clear that Black Presbyterian leadership across the nation was unified behind Edler Hawkins, the chairman of COCAR, and resented the way the majority of white Presbyterians had cast aspersion [sic] upon what Blacks considered to be the good judgment, patriotism, and moral integrity of the COCAR staff. As in the past, a small minority of white Presbyterians at the national and regional levels and in the Presbyterian Interracial Council held the line against an onslaught of several thousand communications from the people in the local congregations....¹⁵⁹

The weekend after the Assembly, a group of black Presbyterians, including clergy and laypeople, gathered to decide how to respond to “what to them represented a white conservative backlash against everything United Presbyterians had stood for in the struggle of the mainline denominations against racial prejudice and injustice.”¹⁶⁰ According to Eugene Turner,

The Black Presbyterians discussed an appropriate rebuff. While they appreciated the fact that the Assembly had upheld the fund and the professional integrity of the staff persons who administered it, there was a feeling that something more was necessary to repudiate the pompous and misguided reaction of White Presbyterian conservatives who were still crying for blood.¹⁶¹

A week later, on June 5, a group of black ministers, led by Bryant George, Edler Hawkins, and Robert P. Johnson, met and decided that they and other willing black Presbyterians, twenty people in total, would make a contribution of \$10,000 to the denomination, “designated to the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid,” in order to “assume personal responsibility, as Black United Presbyterians,” for the Davis grant.¹⁶² On June 7, six of these black Presbyterians, all ministers, sent an open letter to Moderator Lois H. Stair, Stated Clerk William P. Thompson, and Kenneth G. Neigh, announcing this decision due to the fact that they were “concerned about the continuing reaction and alarm” over the grant and felt a “moral obligation” to respond, and noting that their check would arrive on June 15.¹⁶³ The six signatories were Bryant George, Gayraud Wilmore, Robert P. Johnson, J. Oscar McCloud, executive secretary of BPU Ulysses B. Blakeley, and BNM official Edgar Ward.¹⁶⁴ They wrote,

The historical status of black people before most of the courts in this land is not something which any of us have to be educated about, or convinced through the collection of additional facts. The annals of history, and even the current problems of blacks in this country, are all too clear in the fact that justice has not been and still is not equal in the country if the victim happens to be black. We have known this all of our lives. We, like other black people, have continued to have faith in the system of justice in this country. We continue to believe that justice can be had in this country where vigilance is maintained. We stand, therefore, fully behind efforts to secure and ensure that Dr. Angela Davis will receive a fair trial on the allegations which have been made against her....¹⁶⁵

They added that “it is our duty to put on record where we stand.”¹⁶⁶ They stated that their contribution served as their “own affirmation that the cause of justice and liberation will triumph,” and added a key clarifier which was lost on many observers of the situation,

We need to be reassured that our friends within the Church, among whom we count the three of you [Stair, Thompson, and Neigh], will not interpret our action in reimbursing the Fund as a signal that they can now relax and conciliate those forces which are committed to the emasculation of black leadership. We hope that you will press an

offensive, at whatever risk that may involve, that will uphold the strong position that the General Assembly and the Council on Church and Race have taken on this question and others related to racial justice in the United States.¹⁶⁷

Unfortunately, others did mistakenly interpreted this action as an apology by black Presbyterians, rather than as it was intended, as a way to shame the denomination for its white supremacy.¹⁶⁸

The \$10,000 donation consisted of \$500 each from twenty black Presbyterians which, as Wilmore pointed out in a news release at the time, was “over and above” their ordinary pledged giving to local churches.¹⁶⁹ The funds were raised within twenty-four hours.¹⁷⁰ According to Eugene Turner, these individuals would thereby “relieve their White sisters and brothers of ‘the shame’ of Presbyterian participation in defense of Angela Davis.”¹⁷¹ These donors “were calling attention to the offense they felt by the denomination’s reaction.”¹⁷² As quoted in another news release, Lois Stair expressed sadness over this action, because,

Once again blacks have found it necessary to make the first move of love and reconciliation. Once again their bitterness is the first to be overcome. Once again they have shown trust of us, even when we were in the midst of denying their definition of mission.¹⁷³

On June 15, the twenty checks arrived, accompanied by a “Statement of Twenty Black Presbyterians,” signed by the original six signatories of the “Letter” plus an additional fourteen black Presbyterian contributors.¹⁷⁴ At a press conference, Robert P. Johnson, executive for the Presbytery of New York City, presented the \$10,000 check to the denomination’s treasurer, saying, “We assume personal responsibility, as Black Presbyterians, for the United Presbyterian grant,” and that the contribution was “an affirmation of our personal commitment to justice in our land... at considerable sacrifice to ourselves and our families.”¹⁷⁵ According to Wilmore, they thereby “render[ed] the original grant not from a reluctant white church, but from a group of

unabashedly supportive and indignant Black Presbyterians,” partly in order “to vindicate the honor, independence, and fearlessness of BPU.”¹⁷⁶ Among the additional contributors and signatories were the familiar names - all male - of many black Presbyterians who had collaborated as a part of COCAR, BPU, the NCBC, and even the 1950s-era Council of the North and West: Eugene Turner, James Costen, Elo Henderson, Reginald Hawkins, Isaiah Pogue, Clarence Cave, and Edler Hawkins.¹⁷⁷

This new “Statement” was more sternly worded than the previous “Letter.” The “Letter” had stated that these contributions were provided “not as a judgment of other United Presbyterians,” but the new “Statement” said that the contributions were provided,

... as an affirmation of our personal commitment to justice in our land; but more than that - as an indication to the black community that there are black Presbyterians who are more willing to affirm the rectitude of the Church’s legal aid to Angela Davis than many white Presbyterians are willing to reject that rectitude. This predominantly white church will have even less credibility in the black community if we do not perform this act.¹⁷⁸

The “Statement” also announced,

We hope that one day our action may be recognized as one which helped Presbyterians to continue a relevant mission. We believe that our action signals the fact that the days of white paternalism are over. Black men and women can stand on their own feet, and will insist upon their dignity and self-determination.¹⁷⁹

In the controversy over the Black Manifesto, radical black clergy had interpreted the principles of Black Power as requiring that black people demand what was owed to them by white people, but in this instance, they interpreted such principles to require that black people reject white funds.

According to Deborah Mullen, this “Statement,” unlike the more conciliatory “Letter,” contained “no lingering expressions of rapprochement,” and left “the distinct impression that

something within the individual and collective spirit of black United Presbyterians had been deeply violated by the reaction of the wider church” to the Davis grant.¹⁸⁰ This impression was especially clear in its final paragraph, which said,

We are appalled at the extent to which some Presbyterians are willing to go in condemning Angela Davis for her political views, even at the risk of undermining the basic principles upon which this nation was founded.¹⁸¹

The writers compared this behavior to previous white American persecution of Paul Robeson and W. E. B. DuBois, and added,

We condemn those, especially Christians, who would abridge the right of any persons to due process under the law because of the individual’s political views, condition in life, racial or religious background.¹⁸²

On June 17, in an open letter announcing that “the fight is on,” Ulysses Blakeley stated that BPU had designated July 14 as “Liberation Sunday,” on which black clergy and others were invited to make additional contributions to Davis’ legal defense, using BPU as a middleman.¹⁸³ Blakeley also invited contributions from “non-black” Presbyterians who might choose to stand in solidarity with black Presbyterians.¹⁸⁴

On June 18, Wilbur Cox circulated a draft paper to COCAR members, composed by the National Race Staff and intended for internal use, entitled “Why Angela Davis?”¹⁸⁵ After revisions, this document was publicly released by the executive committee in October, under the new title, “Why Angela Davis? A Statement of the Council on Church and Race.”¹⁸⁶ In a section which was removed prior to publication, the draft paper noted the virulent reaction among many Presbyterians to the grant, and said,

The controversy over the wisdom and propriety of the Council’s action is raging all over the church as an apparently organized effort is being made to rid the denomination of

what many consider to be radical and irresponsible elements in the leadership of the United Presbyterian racial justice program.¹⁸⁷

The published statement made a carefully organized argument for the use of the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid for Davis' defense, centered around the necessity of a fair trial for Davis, noting that her "lifelong struggle for black freedom" and her radical views "have caused serious doubt to be cast upon the possibility of her receiving a fair trial in the emotion-charged, polarized atmosphere of the United States today."¹⁸⁸ Similarly, Eugene Turner later recalled that "very few whites understood the consequences of the conditions. Blacks did. If COCAR had been a body of all whites, the grant would not have been made."¹⁸⁹ In 2001, Bryant George looked back on Angela Davis' situation at the time of the Presbyterians' grant as a "legal lynching"¹⁹⁰

The "Why Angela Davis?" statement also made clear the significance of Davis herself for black Presbyterians, stating, after a summary of Davis' background,

For many black Christians, particularly in our own church, she represents something more - the pride and dignity of a black humanity which has been repressed for 350 years, but which today is searching for an expression of manhood and womanhood which reflects the competence, strength, the indomitable spirit and commitment to freedom which the church upholds.¹⁹¹

The statement even argued that the symbolism of Davis herself was "compatible" with Christianity and, in particular, with Black Theology.

Angela Davis, in the minds of many black people in the United States, symbolizes the new black womanhood which is, in many respects, compatible with what we Christians believe and is particularly consonant with the liberation concepts of black religion.¹⁹²

While many white Presbyterians saw Davis as a dangerous, anti-American, even anti-Christian figure undeserving of church intervention even to prevent her legal lynching, these black Presbyterians saw her as, perhaps like Malcolm X, a kind of non-Christian saint, a leader in the

church's own cause: the struggle for human liberation. Eugene Turner's description of Davis captured the aversion and admiration she inspired in white and black Presbyterians, respectively.

She was a woman, atheist, PhD from an ivory [sic] league school, bold in speech and extremely intelligent. She looked fierce and yet beautiful. O yes, she was a communist.¹⁹³

The "Why Angela Davis?" statement also argued for the "dignity and worth" of all people, including Communists, based on Jesus' incarnation, and called Davis, as a Communist, "a political leper," comparing her with biblical figures ostracized because of their leprosy.¹⁹⁴ The document also highlighted the renewed relevance of a 1953 anti-McCarthyist statement by the denomination's General Council.¹⁹⁵ It also acknowledged the unpopularity of COCAR's action, while defending its righteousness, in language reminiscent of the 1969 portrayals of James Forman as a "prophet."

The challenge is to the church, in part through [COCAR], to continue to "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," to dare to champion unpopular causes if that is the will of Christ, and to immerse the church in the milieu and experience of despised, neglected, and oppressed people.¹⁹⁶

The statement also pointed out that its action was in keeping with the denomination's past statements, saying that COCAR "made the grant... *because it believed in what the United Presbyterian Church has always professed about justice, liberation and reconciliation* [emphasis in the original]."¹⁹⁷ It quoted Stated Clerk William Thompson in saying, "It's easy for us to provide help for people who conform to our standards. It is a real test of our commitment... if we are prepared to help those who don't conform to our standards."¹⁹⁸ White minister John Fry agreed that COCAR retained the right to speak for the denomination on matters of race and blackness.

For the Assembly to become overnight experts in black experience and overrule the experts it had elected is just about as close to racism as a racially liberated denomination can get.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, a G.A. commissioner said, “we are convicting people for doing a job that we trusted them to do.”²⁰⁰

Gender in the Davis Incident

Like the controversy surrounding the Davis grant, the 1969 crisis over the Black Manifesto had also resulted in some backlash against church leaders’ support for racial justice. However, such backlash was far greater, and had more long-lasting consequences, in the case of the Davis incident. Several observers have highlighted Davis’ communist affiliation as the key difference between the two incidents, accounting for the great backlash in 1971. However, gender dynamics may have been at least as influential as anti-communism. Furthermore, these two factors are not entirely separable, for white Presbyterian perceptions of Davis’ communism were themselves gendered.

In the Davis incident, gender mattered more in its absence than in its presence; in other words, gendered, personal bonds between James Forman and Presbyterian officials enabled such officials to engineer a more favorable public reaction to the Black Manifesto crisis, referred to in this section as the Forman incident. These same officials would have liked to have generated the same kind of reaction to the Davis incident, but their lack of such gendered, personal bonds with Angela Davis prevented them from doing so effectively.

At a 2016 American Society of Church History panel discussion on Billy Graham, historian Anthea Butler pointed out the role of homosocial male bonding, and the import of

Graham's white male body, in Graham's close relationships with U.S. Presidents, saying that Graham often went skinny-dipping with Lyndon Johnson in the White House pool. Butler noted that this kind of bonding with the President would not have been possible for a woman or a person of color.²⁰¹

James Forman would not have been welcome in that pool, but he did engage in homosocial male bonding with men of color who were leaders in the United Presbyterian Church. As previously discussed, Forman and Wilmore had known each other and worked closely together going back to early 1960s Mississippi. Also, as previously discussed, Wilmore had drawn on their history together in order to defend Forman in 1969.

I do believe that James Forman is a prophet for our times. I have walked picket lines with him and labored with him in the dangerous backwoods of Mississippi; I trust his sincerity and his courage and, most of all, I believe that he is mostly right and the church is mostly wrong.... It may well be that for all his vehemence and rude behavior, God is using James Forman....²⁰²

Also, as previously discussed, Gayraud Wilmore and Oscar McCloud, who with Eugene Turner were the three key officials - all black male clergy - involved in making the Davis grant, had shared at least one social moment in Mississippi, in which Wilmore, to McCloud's surprise, had shared his pipe with Forman.²⁰³ These black men could not go skinny-dipping with Lyndon Johnson, or with white male Presbyterians for that matter, but they could smoke together "in the dangerous backwoods of Mississippi." Perhaps there were a few incidents of bonding similarly with some women activists in similar circumstances, but for the most part these men did a lot of "hanging out with the guys" in their racial justice work. Given this bonding, when Forman's character was called into question, Wilmore eagerly and credibly vouched for him. Forman's presentation to the 1969 Presbyterian General Assembly was carefully stage-managed by

Wilmore and other church officials, and was set in between speeches by Wilmore and three other black and Chicano Presbyterian leaders, all men, all in support of Forman's concerns.²⁰⁴

In the Davis incident, black Presbyterians like Wilmore, McCloud, and Turner did firmly defend the church's grant on Davis' behalf. Black Presbyterians were outraged by white reactions against the grant. Many of them spoke up in defense of the grant, the fund, and the staff involved, criticizing white reactions as racist. However, black male Presbyterian leaders did not know Davis personally, so they could not vouch for her character, at least not in a way that would have seemed authentic to a skeptical majority-white church membership. Maybe these men also subconsciously identified more closely with Forman than with Davis because Forman was a man. The person who actually initiated the grant process on Davis' behalf was a black Presbyterian woman, Inyce Bailey, a member of St. Andrew United Presbyterian Church and of OECA.²⁰⁵ As previously noted, Bailey worked at the Marin County Courthouse, where Davis had been jailed, and she grew concerned at the harassment of African Americans going in and out of the courthouse.²⁰⁶ Bailey brought her concerns to OECA, which then appealed to COCAR to come to Davis' aid.²⁰⁷

Bailey was neither clergy nor a high-ranking denominational official. No black women had yet been ordained as Presbyterian ministers - the first was Katie Geneva Cannon in 1974.²⁰⁸ The terms "womanist theology," and "intersectionality" were not coined until the 1980s.²⁰⁹ Black women who could have had close relationships with Davis, or could at least have spoken of a generalized "black woman's experience," women like Inyce Bailey, did not yet have sufficient formal power in the denomination to effectively defend the church's support for Davis. Of course, Bailey was able to actually secure support for Davis, so her power was not insignificant.

Still, it was a little too early for a black Presbyterian woman to publicly defend Davis on the national stage, in the way that Wilmore had defended Forman in 1969.²¹⁰ The Davis incident was a moment which needed interventions from black women church leaders at the top levels of the church power structure, as well as the insights of womanist theology and intersectionality, but none of those factors were yet available in the ways they would be a few years later.²¹¹

In the Presbyterian response to the Forman incident, Gayraud Wilmore was central. He was instrumental in securing Forman's audience before the General Assembly in San Antonio.²¹² He introduced Forman at the Assembly, presenting him as a credible representative of African American interests.²¹³ Most importantly, Wilmore wrote *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, as a stirring, eloquent, and widely-distributed defense of the Manifesto. When the church decided that it should pay some form of reparations, Wilmore led the creation of two funds for the economic development of black and poor communities, to be managed by representatives from those communities, one of which is still going today.²¹⁴ Forman's proposal also came out during the same year of the release of James Cone's first book, a heady time for the movement for Black Power among black male clergy. These ministers were excited, empowered, and ready to defend Forman, as exemplified by black Presbyterian theologian Preston Williams, who did so in part by quoting Eldridge Cleaver, saying, "We shall have our manhood. We shall have it or the earth will be leveled by our efforts to gain it."²¹⁵



Figure 18. James Forman, Gayraud Wilmore, and Oscar McCloud, ca. 1970.

“Jim Forman, Gayraud Wilmore, and J. Oscar McCloud, ca. 1970,” 1970, J. Oscar (James Oscar) McCloud, 1936- - Archives, RG 523, Box 1, Folder 10, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA.

Things were different with the Davis incident in 1971. Wilmore remained in his Presbyterian racial justice post. The Davis grant was possible only because of the work of COCAR under Wilmore's leadership, following the Forman incident, in setting up a fund for the legal aid of Civil Rights leaders, which COCAR could disburse without (white) oversight.²¹⁶ But Wilmore was not involved in the details of the Davis grant. He had delegated these kinds of activities to Oscar McCloud, who worked with Eugene Turner on the grant's logistics.²¹⁷ Wilmore was also on his way out. He was finishing up what would become his most important book, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, to be published the following year. He also resigned from COCAR the next year, after nine years at its helm.²¹⁸ While COCAR and a group of black Presbyterians did issue statements in support of the Davis grant, and Wilmore was probably involved in writing some of these statements, he did not issue a denomination-wide essay, "The Church's Response to the Trial of Angela Davis," to match his efforts on Forman's behalf.²¹⁹

Another interesting piece of Wilmore's intervention was his use of the term "emasculat[i]on." Wilmore has often used the word "emasculat[i]on" in reference to white oppression of black people, especially black men, and that word appeared again in the Davis incident, in the open letter by black Presbyterians, likely reflecting Wilmore's influence. This letter called critics of the Davis grant, "those forces which are committed to the emasculat[i]on of black leadership."²²⁰ Black Presbyterian leadership at that time was, of course, black male leadership. Davis had already received the funds, so the debate in the church was mostly about whether to discipline the staff responsible for their disbursement, mostly black men. This "emasculat[i]on" language underscored the fact that black male Presbyterian leaders were trying to save their own jobs, and defend their ability to represent black interests in the denomination.²²¹

Wilmore and other black male Presbyterians did not neglect their responsibilities to forcefully defend the Davis grant. However, two years earlier Wilmore had gone far above and beyond his job description in defending Forman. He could be an especially strong and eloquent defender of seemingly radical or disrespectable people if he identified closely with them, as seen in his efforts on behalf of Milton Henry, the Palestinian refugees, the Watts rebels, and James Forman. But, for whatever reason, he seems not to have employed the same kinds of extraordinary efforts in defense of the Davis grant in 1971.

The gender of white male lay-Presbyterians also played a critical role in reactions to the Davis Incident, in terms of white male honor. Historian Christine Heyrman has highlighted, in a nineteenth century Southern context, how white laymen felt their honor and social position were threatened by new forms of evangelical religion.²²² In the Black Power era, white Presbyterian laymen felt similarly threatened. In previous years, local churches and elders had wielded more power, but in the 1960s the denomination had become more centralized, empowering clergy and church bureaucrats, and also taking public stands in support of racial and gender equality. Furthermore, many of these white laymen had served in the second World War, yet now the country they loved was struggling to defeat Vietnamese communists.

Also, Forman had brought his demands to many different denominations and institutions, not just Presbyterians, but the Davis incident was Presbyterian-specific.²²³ Many Presbyterians expressed frustration that they first heard about the grant through the secular news media.²²⁴ Presbyterian laypeople read in their newspapers that their denomination was supporting the legal defense of a black female communist who was accused of complicity in murder. This was embarrassing for many of them. They felt that their denomination had betrayed them, failed to

consult them, hoodwinked them, sullyng the church's noble mission by stretching that mission to include apparent defense of the enemy. Several observers have identified Davis' communism as the key difference between her and Forman.²²⁵ While Forman was a Marxist-inspired radical, Davis was overtly, openly affiliated with the Communist Party.²²⁶ Indeed, Davis' communism was the most common objection cited by more than half of the thousands of angry letters the denomination received as a part of the backlash.²²⁷ However, this is not an either/or question, "was it communism or gender?" - the backlash had several overlapping causes.²²⁸ In fact, the anti-communism of critics of the Davis grant may itself have been gendered. Perhaps white Presbyterian laymen, many of them veterans, had their pride wounded by the fact that their country was losing a war to communist people of color, and they thought people of color in their own church had pulled a fast one on them by giving money to another communist person of color. Their reactions to the Davis grant paralleled their responses to "Hanoi Jane" Fonda's July 1972 visit to North Vietnam, including her being photographed on an antiaircraft gun.²²⁹ The Davis grant was even more troubling to these white male Presbyterians, however, because they felt ashamed by this very public action by *their* church.

Davis was acquitted, and no church official was fired over this incident. The General Assembly voted narrowly to express "serious questions concerning the propriety" of the grant, effectively a slap on the wrist.²³⁰ But the longer-term consequences were more serious. Many white Presbyterians began withholding donations to the church over the incident.²³¹ National and regional church offices were "drastically restructured" over the next three years, including major cuts in spending on "social involvement," and a reduction in the power of national officials.²³² This process was clearly, though not exclusively, tied to both the Forman and Davis incidents.²³³

But the Forman incident seemed to blow over much more smoothly than the Davis incident. If you go into a Presbyterian retirement home today and ask people there about James Forman and the Black Manifesto, they might not recall those events. But bring up Angela Davis, and not only will they remember the church's grant on her behalf, but many will still see that incident as too controversial to talk about. This contrast is rooted partly in gender dynamics, especially in the easy, masculine familiarity between black male Presbyterian leaders and Forman, and in the gendered dynamics surrounding communism.

Aftermath: Polarization, Restructuring, and "Fire Fights"

In the end, Angela Davis, with the help of the UPCUSA and many other donors and supporters, was able to escape a "legal lynching." After sixteen months in prison and three more out on bail, she was acquitted of all charges on June 4, 1972, and returned to the classroom, teaching at the University of California at Santa Cruz.²³⁴ Yet despite COCAR's success in this cause, and its avoidance of a draconian response by the 1971 G.A., the long-term consequences for COCAR were dire. Stated Clerk William Thompson had expressed concern that disagreements over the grant could mean that "a rupture will open up in our church between black and white that may be irremediable."²³⁵ His concern was justified.

According to Eugene Turner, the Davis incident "had an impact on the church's ability to address its mission, entirely," for, "Mission dollars declined rapidly resulting from the protests of congregations and some presbyteries."²³⁶ A gap had long existed between the opinions of left-leaning national staff and more conservative white Presbyterian laypeople, but the Davis incident led the latter to begin "to express their dissatisfaction with their pocket books."²³⁷ One couple

wrote, “We shall withhold giving to the benevolences of the church until this action is rescinded.”²³⁸ One church session wrote, “The session states that it will be its policy to re-orient its benevolence giving and emphasize specific projects over which it can exercise local control until such time as this session regains faith and confidence in the leadership of this denomination.”²³⁹ Unrestricted General Mission giving had already begun to decline, even amid an increase in overall giving, in 1965.²⁴⁰ However, this shift toward restricting funds to projects under local control increased considerably after, albeit perhaps not completely because of, the Davis incident.²⁴¹ While distrust of national leadership and thus greater reliance on localism was common in the era of the Vietnam War, Watergate, and reaction against the Civil Rights Movement, this phenomenon was more pronounced among United Presbyterians than in other similar denominations.²⁴² Of course, white Presbyterians’ white racial backlash and localism was not solely or even principally a product of the Davis incident, for they too lived in and were influenced by the white backlash politics surrounding the 1968 and 1972 U.S. presidential campaigns of Alabama Governor George C. Wallace and President Richard M. Nixon. As previously noted, white male Presbyterian animus toward Davis paralleled white male American animus toward “Hanoi Jane” Fonda, and toward most anti-war protestors at the time. The Davis incident was a uniquely United Presbyterian affair, but it also paralleled, was informed by, and itself influenced the broader U.S. culture of the early 1970s. In general, the climate in the nation as well as in the mainline churches in the 1970s was one of reaction against a decade of racial and social justice activism.

Bryant George pointed out one silver lining in that the Davis incident gave the denomination “the best Christian Education program our church had seen since the Civil War,”

as “it forced Presbyterians all over the world to reexamine what being a Christian was/is and hold that mirror up to themselves.”²⁴³ George’s reference to the U.S. Civil War, however, was also appropriate in that it alluded to the deep divisions and polarization revealed and exacerbated by the events surrounding the Davis grant. According to Dean R. Hoge, these events were an example of the kind of divisions characteristic of the “two-party system” which gradually developed in American Protestantism over the course of the twentieth century.²⁴⁴ While this system has sometimes been described as a division over whether the church or merely individuals should be involved in social action, Hoge’s sociological analysis of the UPCUSA in the early 1970s yielded in a different conclusion.

We found first, that for most persons the issue is not whether the corporate church or only individuals should be involved. The real issue is whether social action, corporate or individual, supports white middle-class interests or appears to threaten those interests. This conclusion suggests that persons who feel generally threatened in present society, for whatever reason, tend more than others to oppose any social action that appears ominous to them. We checked and found this clearly to be the case. The main conflict over the social mission of the church thus turns out to be largely a conflict over maintaining or transcending white middle-class interests.²⁴⁵

James Findlay also highlighted the Davis incident as an “indication of the deepening opposition in all the mainline churches to the continuing efforts of some leaders to reach across racial lines,” and as a case in which, despite (or because of) such efforts, “chasms between church people were widened significantly rather than narrowed.”²⁴⁶ According to Deborah Mullen, the Davis incident “fully exposed the degree to which United Presbyterians already were polarized in their diverse theological interpretations of the church’s calling to unity and of racial justice. . . .”²⁴⁷ She said that black Presbyterian leaders and their allies, especially those on COCAR’s staff and in other denominational positions of power, “were perceived by the wider rank and file membership of

the predominantly white United Presbyterian Church as ‘out of line’” in their support for Davis’ defense.²⁴⁸ This perception, “that the liberals and the blacks were out of control,” validated once and for all in conservative eyes by the Davis grant, “provided the ammunition [conservatives] needed to straighten up a denomination that was already leaning too far left.”²⁴⁹ Mullen pointed out that,

... the predominantly African American staff that was charged by its predominantly European American denomination with the “freedom and responsibility to speak to the church and the nation in matters of race; ... to make public statements on critical issues, and to map out appropriate programs and projects,” understood the mandate and the responsibilities of their corporate office differently than did the majority of rank and file members of the church.²⁵⁰

Gayraud Wilmore argued that the Davis incident “radicalized [Edler] Hawkins and the other Black Presbyterians even more than the Black Manifesto crisis of 1969.”²⁵¹ Oscar McCloud also pointed out the further polarization of black and white Presbyterians by the incident, and the fact that the backlash to the incident did not halt all racial justice action by the denomination.

What the Angela Davis Affair revealed about the nature of the racial justice struggle was that African American Presbyterians and white Presbyterians did not see the issues the same, that the day of liberal whites seeking to identify the issues and “lead” in the effort were over. African American Presbyterians realized that they had to take charge of the racial justice issues and set the agenda that had to do with power and not with picnics. Some white Presbyterians realized for the first time that they had to listen to African American Presbyterian leadership, and not assume they could make informed decisions on behalf of African Americans.

The Angela Davis affair resulted in a closer scrutiny by the General Assembly, agencies, presbyteries, and synods, of decisions made by COCAR. However, that did not stop the program for in the later 70s under the Program Agency the Legal Defense Fund under another name was still making controversial grants.²⁵²

The IRS also played a role in discouraging church-based racial justice action in the early 1970s, as it expressed “an unprecedented interest in the civil rights, anti-poverty, and anti-war

activities of certain religious organizations.”²⁵³ The NCC, IFCO, approximately one hundred of the community groups sponsored by IFCO, and each member of IFCO’s board were audited because of suspicions that these organizations were funding “subversive groups.”²⁵⁴ Numerous other church organizations were investigated and audited between 1970 and 1973, a practice which one observer described as the Nixon administration’s “covert weapon” to “discourage its critics within the churches.”²⁵⁵ Along with other denominations, the UPCUSA received a summons, issued on July 26, 1972, to produce financial and other records in the IRS’s investigation of Cairo, Illinois racial justice leader Charles Koen.²⁵⁶ Wilmore and officials from other denominations who had supported Koen met on August 2 to organize their strategy, which included limited cooperation with the summons.²⁵⁷ Wilmore sought to convince other ecumenical church executives supportive of Koen that this IRS investigation was unjust and reactionary, noting that many racial justice leaders had been “the objects of inquiry by IRS and other governmental agencies in recent years.”²⁵⁸ Despite these assurances, the IRS investigations were successful in reducing church support for racial justice. According to Dean Kelly, the investigations had “a chilling effect,” for “even if the investigated organizations get a clean bill of health, it will often have spent several thousand dollars in legal and other fees to defend itself and will be a little less eager to do anything which might precipitate another complaint and investigation,” therefore such actions worsened the “growing mood of quiescence, consolidation, disenchantment, and loss-of-nerve” in church-based organizations.²⁵⁹

In 1981, ten years after the controversy over the Davis grant, the General Assembly admitted that the denomination had spent the previous decade “relatively isolated from racial justice issues in society.”²⁶⁰ By that point, the BNM had been eliminated, COCAR had suffered

drastic cuts in its funding, and contributions from local churches to the denomination had continued to decline.²⁶¹ SDOP had also faced serious challenges in its early years. It had to institute a moratorium on new funding awards from July 1972 until early 1975 because annual donations were approximately \$2 million, rather than the expected \$10 million.²⁶²

The restructuring process responsible for, among other things, the elimination of the BCE, had been led by Orly Mason, the layman on the denomination's General Council who had spoken out against the Manifesto, angrily left the 1969 G.A., threatened to resign from the Council and leave the denomination, and perhaps threatened Wilmore with physical harm.²⁶³ However, in the end, he did not resign or leave.²⁶⁴ Instead, partly because of the Manifesto crisis and his criticisms of the denomination's handling of it, Mason was soon appointed chairman of the committee responsible for restructuring the denomination's national staff.²⁶⁵ According to John Fry, "his threat to leave the church because he thought it had sold out to black racism was honored with the most influential appointment moderator George Sweazey made that year."²⁶⁶ Mason had been a stern critic of the decision-making power of church officials, as in the case of COCAR's grant to Angela Davis, and Kenneth G. Neigh and John Coventry Smith's dramatic, unilateral 1970 intervention to produce funding for SDOP. After Neigh and Smith's action, Mason reportedly said of his committee's mission, "We have to have a structure that will never again produce a Kenneth Neigh."²⁶⁷

This restructuring took place from 1971 to 1974. It involved the elimination of the national boards, the elimination of a quarter of funding at the national level and a quarter of the national staff, and a reduction in funding of social action.²⁶⁸ Since many of the newest hires were women and people of color - which often made them the most liberal staffers - they were the first

to go.²⁶⁹ This process sought greater “accountability” among the national staff, as well as “decentralization” and “participatory decisionmaking.”²⁷⁰ According to John Fry, who in 1973 called Angela Davis the “most influential person in the UPCUSA since 1971” and said that “she broke the church wide open without trying,” the restructuring committee’s general message to church members was, “We know who pays the bills. You do. We know how you feel about James Forman and Angela Davis. Well, we won’t let it happen again.”²⁷¹ According to Eugene TeSelle, this process “stands as the undoing of the 60s and as a grotesque caricature of the 60s theme that ‘the church is mission,’” an “equation” which “was too easily transmuted into a rational, managerial approach that made the most of efficiency.”²⁷² TeSelle pointed out the irony that the Presbyterian Lay Committee, a right-wing group formed in 1964 in opposition to church-based social action and to the Confession of 1967, “became the chief beneficiary of the 60s ideology of participatory democracy and populist protest, setting itself up as the champion of all who were discontented in the church.”²⁷³ According to John Fry, the over-reliance on the term, “reconciliation,” popularized in the UPCUSA by the Confession of 1967, enabled the denomination to prioritize peace and unity at the expense of justice.²⁷⁴ The Witherspoon Society, a new Presbyterian social justice organization, was founded in 1973 in response to these kinds of concerns.²⁷⁵ According to Wilmore, the staff indeed became more responsive to popular opinion after the Davis incident, becoming more careful to avoid arousing “the displeasure of middle America.”²⁷⁶ Wilmore also said,

I think reactionary forces within the church took the initiative in that [Davis] situation, in other words, I don’t think the headlines in the newspaper or what was going on in the society in general, was as important in that particular period than was the renewal of conservative and reactionary forces within the churches itself, who were now feeling triumphant after many years of being eclipsed by Edler [Hawkins] and all of us who were

working in the race front, now felt that this was an opportunity to get this crowd, and to really rid the church once and for all of this kind of influence. And I think they came down hard on that Angela Davis period. And I think that period, 1972, '73, '74... was a period in which they reigned supreme, in our church, and I cannot imagine that some of the restructuring and so forth that happened was not a result of their influence, in the judicatories, at the grassroots level. That whole business about calling the church back to the grassroots, and giving the laypeople more of an influence at the presbytery level and so forth, I'm sure had something to do with the action that, or had something to do with the [Council on] Church and Race program, during that period.²⁷⁷

The plan to restructure the church at the national level actually began in the early 1960s, predating the Forman and Davis incidents, and occurred for a variety of reasons.²⁷⁸ However, these later events gave new energy to, and a new rationale for, the restructuring process. Reaction against Forman and Davis made this process more “thorough in eliminating the qualities that made the old system work.”²⁷⁹ The restructuring plan was presented to the G.A. in 1970, and the final vote for the plan took place at the 1971 Assembly, after a mere forty-five minutes of debate, just prior to the lengthy debate over the Davis grant.²⁸⁰ COCAR's funding and staff had been reduced by 1973.²⁸¹ The 1981 G.A. admitted that these structural changes had come, at least in part, at the expense of racial justice.²⁸² As Amy Miracle asked, “Did the innovative and effective social action agencies of the late sixties and early seventies do nothing more than insure [sic] their own demise?”²⁸³ The denomination did continue its conservative trend in the 1980s, content to limit much of its social justice work to the making of pronouncements.²⁸⁴ Much of the church's attention in the 1980s was also focused on its 1983 reunion with the southern-based Presbyterian Church (U.S.), to form the Presbyterian Church (USA).²⁸⁵ However, the substantial funds invested by the denomination - in efforts like legislative action, voter registration via the Hattiesburg Minister's Project, PEDCO, SDOP, and the Emergency Fund for Legal Aid,

continued to produce benefits for poor, black, and oppressed people well after the completion of the restructuring process.²⁸⁶

Despite the roiling controversy among United Presbyterians and the major consequences for this denomination going forward as a result of its intervention in her case, Angela Davis had almost nothing to say about this intervention - a silence which was a source of deep frustration and disappointment for some black Presbyterians, including Eugene Turner and Gayraud Wilmore. The lack of any mention of this grant in Davis' 1974 autobiography was particularly galling to both men. Wilmore said,

I do think we flunked out when it came to making Angela Davis face up to her moral obligation to at least understand what we were doing and dialogue with you [Eugene Turner] about it. It continues to make me angry that she didn't even mention the incident in her autobiography...²⁸⁷

According to Turner, in conversation with Wilmore,

Gay, I kept [to] myself, my not so quiet anger with Angela all these years. I had one conversation with her about the grant and the issues with which we were wrestling and it was a turn off for me. I too was angered that Cecil Williams, the pastor of Glide United [Methodist] Church, according to him, was appointed her spiritual counselor. Every time he went across the Golden Gate Bridge to visit her, he held a press conference on his visit. She would not give me one paragraph, for that matter, one sentence of response to the Presbyterian grant. I made it quite clear that the grant came as a result of African American efforts. I thought that would get her attention. It apparently didn't.²⁸⁸

He added,

... Angela was oblivious to the issues confronted by Black Presbyterians. She told me at the time that the issues were ones belonging to the Presbyterian Church when [I] approached [her] to ask that she make a comment to the church constituency, especially Blacks who fought hard to establish the Legal Defense Fund. Without stating the words, she said it was not her problem. She said the Presbyterian Church made the decision to fund her defense and that it was doing what it wanted to do. My request was to give me an appreciating [sic] comment that I could show that she was in touch with our struggle. She refused.²⁸⁹

Bryant George did not share Wilmore's and Turner's objections to Davis' lack of overt appreciation for COCAR's grant. In correspondence with the other two men, he expressed pride in having helped prevent a "legal lynching," and said, "I believe that you all expected too much of this affair... We did the right thing. We did it for the right reason. We should have no complaints about her...."²⁹⁰ He added,

We did something we thought was right and good and we had no right to expect gratitude for what we did when we did it simply because it was right. This is a bit like asking your children to be grateful that you bought shoes for them when they were 4 years old. We got what we were due and she got what she wanted....²⁹¹

In the end, Wilmore, Turner, George, and Oscar McCloud all expressed pride in what they had accomplished in facilitating the grant. Wilmore said, "I know we did the right thing and [am] proud of it after all these years."²⁹² McCloud, reflecting on the response of the denomination as a whole, said,

I believe it did as well as a predominantly white Protestant denomination could. This was the same church that in 1969 had responded to the Black Manifesto more positively than any other American Church (because of African American Presbyterian leadership). It had as a result of this development in 1970 created one of the most unique programs of any Protestant denomination, the Self-Development of People [program], that was the result of African American Presbyterians, Liberal whites and conservative whites working together.

Given the anger in the church the General Assembly had to do something and it did as near to nothing as it could, "question the impropriety" of COCAR's decision to make the grant. It is important to remember what the General Assembly did not do. It did not abolish the program, it did not take away the funds, it did not ask that COCAR request the money be returned. Any one or all of these choices were available to the General Assembly.²⁹³

In 2016, Eugene Turner wrote,

The [Davis] crisis... is still debated by liberal and conservative Presbyterians to this day, and symbolizes for generations to come the determination of Black Presbyterians to stand

resolute in the long and sometimes neglected struggle of the Christian churches for justice and Black liberation in America.²⁹⁴

As previously discussed, Wilmore has frequently drawn on his military combat experience, including to inform and interpret church-based social action strategy. Such language has often involved references to “reconnaissance,” and was a major theme in his 1962 *The Secular Relevance of the Church*.²⁹⁵ As previously noted, in 2007 Wilmore reflected back on his CORAR/COCAR days, and especially on the Forman and Davis incidents, to argue that the church, like an army, needs a “highly mobile reconnaissance patrol... collecting intelligence... and risking occasional fire fights to test [the enemy’s] strength.”²⁹⁶ He noted that such reconnaissance should involve “little skirmishes,” for “news should be made, not simply reviewed by the church.”²⁹⁷ In his view, CORAR/COCAR served this purpose, taking “strategic risks allowing the astonished church to move forward into [unfamiliar] terrain.”²⁹⁸ He identified both the Forman and Davis incidents as “fire fights.” Indeed, the “fire fight” in the Forman case did enable the “church to move forward into [unfamiliar] terrain,” through reparations payments to IFCO and the establishment of PEDCO, SDOP, and the EFLA, as well as the use of the EFLA to support Davis’ legal defense. On the other hand, the Davis grant, however justified, had the opposite effect, contributing to dramatic reductions in church involvement in social and racial justice. Wilmore carried the military metaphor a little further.

The Angela Davis debacle brought to light for many white and black Presbyterians that their national staff, and particularly the staff of COCAR, was far out in front of the denomination, establishing beachheads in the secular world that were highly threatening to the conservative wing of the church.... [Even after his resignation] The Program on Church and Race, it must be said, did not falter in its determination to give leadership in the places where the fires burned the hottest on the battlefield.²⁹⁹

Despite the challenges for COCAR in his absence, Wilmore himself may have appropriately applied the “intelligence” he had acquired as a result of testing the enemy’s strength amid the Davis “fire fight.” Perhaps what he learned was that there was no longer sufficient room in the United Presbyterian Church’s governing structure for him to pursue his mission there. Instead, this Buffalo Soldier had to abandon his original front, and open up a new one, joining James Cone and other advocates of black, feminist, womanist, and liberation theologies to storm the beaches of theological education, taking the fight for racial and social justice deep into the heart of the ivory tower, where the fires of battle continued to rage.

-
- ¹ George, "A Firebell in the Night," pp. 7-8; Turner, *My Life*, p. 117; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.
- ² George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 8; Turner, *My Life*, p. 117.
- ³ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 86-87, quoting from *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 648; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 9.
- ⁴ George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 8.
- ⁵ George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 8; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 259, quoting from Dean R. Hoge, *Division In the Protestant House: the Basic Reasons Behind Intra-Church Conflicts* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 110.
- ⁶ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 128-130; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 271-272, 280; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 97-98.
- ⁷ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 648; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.
- ⁸ *Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, p. 648; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 9.
- ⁹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.
- ¹⁰ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.
- ¹¹ Davis knew the girls murdered in the September 1963 bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 20, 24-25, 32-33.
- ¹² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 25-28.
- ¹³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 34.
- ¹⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 34-35.
- ¹⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 35-36.
- ¹⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 38-39.
- ¹⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 40-41.
- ¹⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 41.
- ¹⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 42.
- ²⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 42-43.
- ²¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 40-43.
- ²² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 47-49.
- ²³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 52.
- ²⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 52-53.
- ²⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 54.
- ²⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 56-57.
- ²⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 57.
- ²⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 57-58.
- ²⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 58-59.
- ³⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 60-61.
- ³¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 61.
- ³² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 65.
- ³³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 65.
- ³⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 55, 66.
- ³⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 62, 67.
- ³⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 62, 67.
- ³⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 62, 67.

³⁸ Jackson was actually wounded, and died soon after the incident. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 61-62, 67-69.

Davis claimed that one of the three firearms allegedly collected from the courthouse was a weapon which had been previously confiscated during an LAPD raid. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 72. Elsewhere Mullen mistakenly states that two more of the jurors were also killed, for a total of six dead and three wounded from the total of nine people in the getaway van. In making this error, Mullen is likely drawing on a passage in Angela Davis' biography. Davis wrote, "The judge..., the district attorney... and several jurors were led by the brothers into a van.... A San Quentin guard fired on the van. Then a barrage of shots tore into the van and when the smoke had cleared, *all except one inside had either been killed or wounded*" [emphasis added]. Davis then listed those who were killed or wounded, but only mentioned one of the jurors (as wounded). However, other accounts of the events, despite differing in other details, are unanimous in stating that three female juror hostages entered the van, and only one of them was shot (and wounded). Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 81; Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), p. 278; J. A. Parker, *Angela Davis: The Making of a Revolutionary* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973), p. 169; Ann Fagan Ginger, ed., *Angela Davis Case Collection: Annotated Procedural Guide and Index* (Berkeley, California: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, 1974), pp. xvi-xix,

One source also noted that two of these three jurors later testified in Davis' trial. Mary Timothy, *Jury Woman: The story of the trial of Angela Y. Davis - written by a member of the jury* (San Francisco and Palo Alto, California: Glide Publications and Emty Press, 1975), pp. 97-99, 107.

³⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 70-71.

⁴⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 69, 71-73; Turner, *My Life*, p. 117.

⁴¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 72, 74.

⁴² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 74-78

⁴³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 80.

⁴⁴ These were COCAR's staff members from 1970 to 1971. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 170. The Council on Church and Race (COCAR) itself technically just consisted of Council/board members, but by this point the organization called its staff the "Division of Church and Race," and some of its staff members were "chairman" (formerly "executive director") or "associate chairman" of this staff "Division," not to be confused with the chairs of the [board of] the Council on Church and Race.

⁴⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 171; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 86-87.

⁴⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 172.

⁴⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 173.

⁴⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 180; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.

⁵⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 180-181; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87.

⁵¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 181-182.

⁵² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 182. According to Bryant George, members of this church "felt that, based on what they had heard around town, Angela Davis would be railroaded." George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 8.

⁵³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 183.

⁵⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 183-184.

⁵⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 184.

⁵⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 184.

⁵⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 269, quoting from Eugene G. Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Bryant George, and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 8, 2001. Turner's own language identified Bailey's church as "the Marin City Presbyterian Church." He likely either mis-stated the church's name, or merely referred to it in terms of its location ("the Presbyterian Church in Marin City"), as there were probably not two different black Presbyterian Churches in Marin City at the time, both of them intimately involved in the Davis grant. I have found no record of a church named, "Marin City Presbyterian Church." The city, as of 2010, does have a large African American population, but the entire city population is less than three thousand.

⁵⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 184.

-
- 59 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 185.
- 60 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 184-185.
- 61 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 185-186.
- 62 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 185-186.
- 63 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 186.
- 64 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 186.
- 65 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 187.
- 66 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 187.
- 67 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 188.
- 68 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 188.
- 69 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 189.
- 70 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 189.
- 71 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 190.
- 72 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 190.
- 73 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 190-191.
- 74 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 191.
- 75 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 191.
- 76 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 192, 221.
- 77 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 193.
- 78 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 193.
- 79 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 193-194.
- 80 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 193-194.
- 81 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 194-195. Turner said that he “had made the initial contact with Angela Davis and her lawyers and had conducted the negotiations with the local congregation in Marin City [St. Andrew] that had petitioned the national church for help.” Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- 82 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 195.
- 83 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 151.
- 84 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 151.
- 85 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 151.
- 86 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 151.
- 87 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, pp. 151-152.
- 88 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 152.
- 89 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 195.
- 90 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 195-196.
- 91 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 196.
- 92 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 196.
- 93 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 196.
- 94 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 196-197.
- 95 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 199.
- 96 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 204-205.
- 97 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 87.
- 98 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 219; Turner, *My Life*, p. 120.
- 99 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 206.
- 100 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 205-206.
- 101 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 207.
- 102 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 207-208.
- 103 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 208.
- 104 Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” p. 127.
- 105 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 208.
- 106 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 208; Parker, *Angela Davis*, p. 202.
- 107 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 211-213.
- 108 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 211-212, 214.
- 109 Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 87.

-
- ¹¹⁰ Turner, *My Life*, p. 117.
- ¹¹¹ Turner, *My Life*, pp. 117-118.
- ¹¹² Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 88.
- ¹¹³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 212.
- ¹¹⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 213; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 87; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 220; Parker, *Angela Davis*, p. 201.
- ¹¹⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001. "Had it not been for the excellent floor maneuvering of Jesse [Editor: Turner is blocking on the last name of the past of the Church of the Master in New York City] the General Assembly would have chastised COCAR. Jesse carried the floor debate and simply outmaneuvered the rest including the Moderator, Lois Stair." The "Editor" in this case is Deborah Mullen. Robinson was no longer pastor of Church of the Master at that time. However, this floor debate leader was probably Robinson, since his name was closely linked with that church, and since few others would have had the stature to "carry the floor debate" at such an Assembly.
- ¹¹⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹¹⁷ Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 69 (note 26).
- ¹¹⁸ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 88; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 211-212, 213-14; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 220.
- ¹¹⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 211. Miracle lists the vote as 347 to 303. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 88.
- ¹²⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 216; Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹²¹ Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹²² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 269, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹²³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹²⁴ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- ¹²⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 219-221.
- ¹²⁶ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 88.
- ¹²⁷ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89, quoting from 1985 interview with Kenneth Neigh.
- ¹²⁸ Eugene TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict" (*Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 41-47), pp. 43-44.
- ¹²⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹³⁰ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89.
- ¹³¹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 232; Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 220.
- ¹³² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 233.
- ¹³³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 259-260.
- ¹³⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 260.
- ¹³⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 261.
- ¹³⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 262.
- ¹³⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 262.
- ¹³⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 263.
- ¹³⁹ George, "A Firebell in the Night," p. 8; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 259, quoting from Dean R. Hoge, *Division In the Protestant House: the Basic Reasons Behind Intra-Church Conflicts* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 110. George says it was 7,000 letters, but Miracle says 10,000, as does Hoge. Miracle says that the letters were negative at a rate of 70 to 1, while Hoge says that over 85% of the letters were negative.
- ¹⁴⁰ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 90.
- ¹⁴¹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 93.
- ¹⁴² Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 94.

-
- ¹⁴³ Parker, *Angela Davis*, p. 199.
- ¹⁴⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 263.
- ¹⁴⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 265.
- ¹⁴⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 264. These suggested responses are from among those letters reporting session actions, whereas the categories of reasons for opposition were from among all letters received. GAGM probably referred to "General Assembly General Mission."
- ¹⁴⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 264. These reasons for support are from among those letters reporting session actions, rather than from all supportive letters received.
- ¹⁴⁸ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 93-94; Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- ¹⁴⁹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 94.
- ¹⁵⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- ¹⁵¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 143.
- ¹⁵² Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66. "Reported by Dr. Lillian Anthony, formerly of the Louisville staff, at a meeting of Presbyterian civil rights veterans at a conference in Washington, D.C. in 2002." Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 69 (note 23).
- ¹⁵³ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 94-95.
- ¹⁵⁴ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 95.
- ¹⁵⁵ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 95.
- ¹⁵⁶ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 90.
- ¹⁵⁷ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 90; McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.
- ¹⁵⁸ McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.
- ¹⁵⁹ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," pp. 128-129.
- ¹⁶⁰ Turner, *My Life*, p. 118; Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 226. Turner says that this group of black Presbyterians, including clergy and laypersons, met during the weekend after the Assembly, which would have been May 29-30.
- ¹⁶¹ Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹⁶² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 226; Turner, *My Life*, p. 118; Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 130.
- ¹⁶³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 225-226; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 90; Parker, *Angela Davis*, p. 201.
- ¹⁶⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 226; Turner, *My Life*, p. 119.
- ¹⁶⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 227, quoting from "Letter from Black United Presbyterians, June 7, 1971, RG 301.9, box 15, folder 17, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA." See also Turner, *My Life*, pp. 119-120.
- ¹⁶⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 227.
- ¹⁶⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 227, quoting from "Letter from Black United Presbyterians." See also Turner, *My Life*, p. 120.
- ¹⁶⁸ Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- ¹⁶⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 228-229; Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹⁷⁰ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 129.
- ¹⁷¹ Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹⁷² Turner, *My Life*, p. 118.
- ¹⁷³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 228, quoting from "NEWS, News Release, Presbyterian Office of Information, June 9, 1971, RG 301.9, box 16, folder 11, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA."
- ¹⁷⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 229, 231-232.
- ¹⁷⁵ Turner, *My Life*, p. 119; Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 130.
- ¹⁷⁶ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 130.
- ¹⁷⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 232.
- ¹⁷⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 230, quoting from "'Statement of Twenty Black Presbyterians,' June 15, 1971, RG 301.9, box 15, folder 17, Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA."

-
- ¹⁷⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 230-231, quoting from "Statement of Twenty Black Presbyterians." Miracle attributes this quote not to the "Statement," but to Robert P. Johnson as quoted in *Presbyterian Life* on the occasion of his presentation of the check to the BNM. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 90-91, quoting from "Black Churchmen Contribute \$10,000 to Emergency Fund for Legal Aid," *Presbyterian Life*, July 15, 1971, p. 40.
- ¹⁸⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 231.
- ¹⁸¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 231, quoting from "Statement of Twenty Black Presbyterians."
- ¹⁸² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 231, quoting from "Statement of Twenty Black Presbyterians."
- ¹⁸³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 234.
- ¹⁸⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 233-235.
- ¹⁸⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 237-238.
- ¹⁸⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 238; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 91. Mullen says the statement was released at an unknown date. However, Miracle says that "COCAR's official response to the incident... was released in October 1971." It is unclear whether this "official response" was the same as the "Why Angela Davis?" statement, but that seems likely. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 91.
- ¹⁸⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 241.
- ¹⁸⁸ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 244.
- ¹⁸⁹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 269, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹⁹⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 270, quoting from Bryant George, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Eugene G. Turner, and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 10, 2001.
- ¹⁹¹ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 245.
- ¹⁹² Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 246.
- ¹⁹³ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 269, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- ¹⁹⁴ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 247-248.
- ¹⁹⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 249-250.
- ¹⁹⁶ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 91, quoting from "Council on Church and Race Responds to the General Assembly," *Presbyterian Life*, November 1, 1971, p. 39.
- ¹⁹⁷ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 129.
- ¹⁹⁸ Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 129.
- ¹⁹⁹ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 91, quoting Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 42.
- ²⁰⁰ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 92.
- ²⁰¹ Anthea Butler, presentation as a part of a panel, "Discussion of Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Harvard, 2014)," American Society of Church History Winter Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, January 9, 2016.
- ²⁰² Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160. Calhoun is quoting from "Gayraud Wilmore, Unpublished Sermon, Germantown Community Church, Germantown, Pannsylvania [sic], May 4, 1969. Papers of Malcolm Calhoun."
- ²⁰³ Turner, *My Life*, p. 118; McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.
- ²⁰⁴ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 68-69. Furthermore, white moderates like Malcolm Calhoun, the Presbyterian official who had taken careful note of Wilmore's support of Forman, were exactly the sort of people Wilmore and other black male Presbyterians needed to convince that Forman was a decent human being deserving of an audience with the church.
- ²⁰⁵ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 184.
- ²⁰⁶ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 268. Alternately spelled as "Iniece" Bailey. Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 185.
- ²⁰⁷ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 268-269.

²⁰⁸ Emilie M. Townes, “Womanist Theology,” *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 1165-1173), p. 1168; Robina Marie Winbush, “She dared to say yes: A Reflection on Katie Geneva Cannon” (*The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 3, 2018, pp. 22-26), p. 22. Pauli Murray, quoted earlier in relation to the Forman incident, would become the first black female Episcopal priest in 1977.

²⁰⁹ Katie Cannon would also become the first black woman to earn a doctorate at Union Theological Seminary in 1983. Alice Walker would not use the term “womanist” until 1978. It was not until 1985 that Katie Cannon would first use “womanist” in relation to religious studies. Townes, “Womanist Theology,” pp. 1165, 1168. Kimberlé Crenshaw did not introduce the term “intersectionality” until 1989.

²¹⁰ This incident occurred just months before Shirley Chisholm announced her 1972 campaign for U.S. President, and three years before Barbara Jordan would demand the impeachment of the man who won that election.

²¹¹ In a comment which alluded to some of the tensions between black male Presbyterian clergy and women at the time, Eugene Turner, commenting on the Davis incident and on the subsequent decline in church-based anti-racism efforts, wrote, “. . . we have yet to see African Americans treated without prejudice. As you know we only have a few African Americans serving in pastorates in of [sic] large White congregations, one of the most salient indicators of continuing racism in the church. There was a time when Blacks felt threatened by the emergence of White women ministers because we knew they would rise above African Americans in the advance in leadership roles in the church. The fear was warranted because we have seen them rise above African Americans in the leadership roles. This comment is dealing with racism and not regretting what White women have accomplished. It is to note that the battle for justice for African Americans in the Presbyterian Church is far from over while recognizing African Americans have progressed since the 1970s, the era of the Angela Davis grant.” Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ’s Name?*, p. 272, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.

²¹² Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65; Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 66-67.

²¹³ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 68.

²¹⁴ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65; George, “A Firebell in the Night,” pp. 12-14.

²¹⁵ Williams, “The Atlanta Document,” p. 1312.

²¹⁶ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 65; Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 86-87.

²¹⁷ McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²¹⁸ McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²¹⁹ Wilmore, “Identity and Integration,” pp. 128-130; Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” pp. 90-91.

²²⁰ Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ’s Name?*, p. 227, quoting from “Letter from Black United Presbyterians.”

Other instances of Wilmore’s use of the term “emasculatation” include Wilmore, “Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965,” pp. 251-252; Wilmore, Jr., letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, February 17, 1967; Wilmore, Jr., “Crisis in Civil Rights,” *The New York Times*, February 27, 1967, published March 5, 1967; Harbison, “The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr.,” p. 8.

²²¹ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 91.

²²² See Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). Heyrman describes, albeit from a very different, early nineteenth century southern context, the clash between white men’s sense of pride/honor, and changes in religious practices which called such men to public acts of repentance, as well as such men’s uncomfortable subservience to the younger, unmarried men who served as Methodist circuit riders.

²²³ Also, in the Forman incident, Forman had been the one to bring his case to the doorstep of the Presbyterian Church. But in the case of Davis, she did not reach out to the church. Church officials, rather, determined that supporting her was a part of their mission, and decided to issue the grant.

²²⁴ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 89.

²²⁵ Miracle, “Strange Bedfellows,” p. 87. Oscar McCloud cites communism as a major factor, especially in the context of the Vietnam War. McCloud, interview by the author, Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.

²²⁶ Davis, *Angela Davis*, p. viii.

-
- 227 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 90, 92. For example, one letter said, "We are longtime members of the Presbyterian Church. We are amazed at the action of the General Assembly donating some of our money for the defense of Angela Davis. Angela Davis, whether innocent or guilty, is a menace to the United States and to Christianity since she is an avowed communist." Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 93.
- 228 For example, American fears of communism have a history of including or even covering for racism. Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 93.
- 229 Colby Itkowitz, "How Jane Fonda's 1972 trip to North Vietnam earned her the nickname, 'Hanoi Jane,'" *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2018, accessed August 23, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/09/18/how-jane-fondas-1972-trip-to-north-vietnam-earned-her-the-nickname-hanoi-jane/>.
- 230 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 89.
- 231 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 95-96.
- 232 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 97-98.
- 233 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 97-98.
- 234 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 18; Turner, *My Life*, p. 120.
- 235 Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 129.
- 236 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- 237 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 95.
- 238 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 95.
- 239 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 95-96.
- 240 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 96.
- 241 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 96.
- 242 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 96.
- 243 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 272, quoting from Bryant George, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 10, 2001.
- 244 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 199.
- 245 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 258, quoting from Dean R. Hoge, *Division In the Protestant House*, pp. 119-120.
- 246 Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle*, p. 220.
- 247 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 275-276.
- 248 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 277-278.
- 249 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 278.
- 250 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 279.
- 251 Wilmore, "Identity and Integration," p. 132.
- 252 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 279-80, quoting from J. Oscar McCloud, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, November 12, 2002.
- 253 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 206.
- 254 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 206.
- 255 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 206.
- 256 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 207.
- 257 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 207.
- 258 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, pp. 207-208.
- 259 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 208.
- 260 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 84.
- 261 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 84.
- 262 Pimblott, *Faith in Black Power*, p. 199.
- 263 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 86, 97; Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 264 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 265 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 86, 97. See also Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.
- 266 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 36.

- 267 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 86.
- 268 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 97; TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," p. 44.
- 269 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 97; TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," p. 44.
- 270 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 98.
- 271 Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 38; Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 98, quoting Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, p. 55.
- 272 TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," pp. 42-43.
- 273 TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," p. 43.
- 274 TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," p. 44, quoting Fry, *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*, pp. 10-11, 44-47, 68-69.
- 275 TeSelle, "C67 - Witness and Conflict," p. 44.
- 276 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 98.
- 277 Wilmore and McCloud, "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]."
- 278 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 98.
- 279 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 101.
- 280 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 99.
- 281 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 99.
- 282 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," pp. 99-100.
- 283 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 101.
- 284 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 101.
- 285 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 101.
- 286 Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 102.
- 287 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, pp. 269-70, quoting from Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Bryant George, and Eugene G. Turner, December 9, 2001.
- Mullen also summarized some of Wilmore's additional comments as, "Angela Davis didn't care about 'Black Churchmen inside or outside of a White, capitalist denomination.'" Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 271, quoting from Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Bryant George, and Eugene G. Turner, December 11, 2001, ed. by Deborah F. Mullen.
- 288 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 270, quoting from Eugene G. Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Bryant George, and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 10, 2001. J. A. Parker also notes the Rev. Cecil A. Williams of Glide Memorial Methodist Church in San Francisco as having "been widely publicized as the spiritual adviser of Angela Davis." Parker, *Angela Davis*, p. 202.
- 289 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 272, quoting from Turner, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 8, 2001.
- 290 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 270, quoting from George, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 10, 2001, and from Bryant George, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, J. Oscar McCloud, Eugene G. Turner, and Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., December 11, 2001.
- 291 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 270, quoting from George, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 10, 2001.
- 292 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 269, quoting from Wilmore, Jr., e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen et al, December 9, 2001.
- 293 Mullen, *Bound Together in Christ's Name?*, p. 281, quoting from McCloud, e-mail message to Deborah F. Mullen, November 12, 2002.
- 294 Turner, *My Life*, p. 120.
- 295 Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, pp. 69, 74-75.
- 296 Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.
- 297 Wilmore, *The Secular Relevance of the Church*, p. 74.
- 298 Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 66.
- 299 Wilmore, "Recollections," p. 67.

EPILOGUE

Teaching, Scholarship, and Retirement, 1972-2020

Leaving the Commission

On September 1, 1972, Gayraud Wilmore began his second career or calling. This change was precipitated, at least in part, by the circumstances surrounding the grant by the United Presbyterian Church in support of the legal defense of Angela Davis. Wilmore had spent fourteen of the previous seventeen years seeking social action and racial justice as a denominational official with the Board of Christian Education in Philadelphia and, after an interlude at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, with the Commission on Religion and Race (CORAR) in New York, between 1955 and 1972.¹ In his second career, from 1972 until his 1990 retirement, Wilmore would serve as a theological educator and scholar of Black Theology, black religious history, and black church studies. In Wilmore's words, "a shadow of confusion and misunderstanding was cast across the United Presbyterians at the end of [his tenure] which almost shattered my work as executive... and resulted in my resignation."² However, it does not appear that Wilmore was forced to resign. He recalled,

So I think we were part of a witch-hunt that was going on in that period.... the people who wanted to get us really came all out on the Angela Davis affair to do that, and I guess in some ways they succeeded, in a way they broke up the Council on Church and Race, in the period 1971-72, although I did not leave my job for fear of them.³

Elsewhere, Wilmore wrote,

The council was shaken by the clamor of some for its head, and I resigned in 1972, without any pressure whatsoever from my superiors, to accept a call from the School of Theology of Boston University to succeed Preston N. Williams as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Social Ethics.⁴

On April 18, 1972, Boston University announced that it had appointed Gayraud Wilmore as its Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Social Ethics.⁵ This professorship had been established on April 5, 1968, the day after the assassination of King, who was an alumn.⁶ Wilmore's appointment was effective September 1, 1972.⁷ The inaugural King professor, Preston N. Williams, had taken a professorship at Harvard Divinity School.⁸ Williams had previously succeeded Wilmore as chair of the Theological Commission of the National Conference of Black Churchmen (NCBC) - now Wilmore was succeeding Williams as the King professor. In announcing the appointment, Walter G. Muelder, Dean of the School of Theology, said of Wilmore, "He will be a dynamic and creative force in social ethics at Boston University. He combines statesmanship in religion with intellectual originality."⁹

Reflecting on his radical role in the United Presbyterian Church, guiding (sometimes dragging) it into the Black Power era including through the Black Manifesto crisis and the Angela Davis incident, Gayraud Wilmore acknowledged that he developed a "reputation for being 'too radical' for many white Presbyterians," and that the Davis incident cast "a shadow of confusion and misunderstanding" across the denomination.¹⁰ He said,

I must have been nuts to believe that I, growing up in the Black ghetto of North Philadelphia with all its needs and deprivations, and with a lower class education from a poor and segregated Black college, had what it would take to change the velocity and direction of this overwhelmingly white, upper middle class denomination to inevitable doom as a citadel of Black Power. That's not exactly what I understood to be my job... but that is what many white Presbyterians read into my rhetoric and actions during the "long hot summers" of the pitched battles between the white power structure of the nation, particularly in the South and in Washington, D.C., and the relatively rare phenomenon of African American radicalism which seemed willing to pull that nation down in order to save it for Jesus and Liberty.¹¹

Wilmore acknowledged further critiques of his CORAR tenure, including one that blamed the decline - in terms of membership, finances, and influence - of mainline Protestantism on the Black Power movement, and perhaps on social and racial justice movements more broadly.

...some will say that I lost my way back in the late 1960s and that the sad plight of the major white denominations and most of those still-separately Black, is the result of the domestic war over the land, wealth, and quality of life in urban America. A war between Black and White, directly traceable to the institutionalization of Black Power in the African American community of the 20th century.¹²

He disagreed, however, with this diagnosis of the problem, using a phrase reminiscent of his favorite Bible verse, Romans 8:22, “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”¹³

I believe just the opposite.... I thank God for giving me a small role in his possible but painful project of bringing our nation and today’s world to their destiny of humanization. Thanks be to God!¹⁴

On the occasion of his departure from COCAR, in a turn of phrase which expressed great admiration for the racial justice staffer just one year after he had been the target of fierce criticism throughout the denomination, the United Presbyterian General Assembly said of Wilmore, “He is one of our Lord’s most faithful servants, a Christian prophet and social martyr.”¹⁵ This jarring turnabout was reminiscent of the praise expressed for Wilmore by Robert B. Boell and McLain C. Spann upon the young minister’s departure from Second Presbyterian Church in West Chester in 1952.

Black Religion and Black Radicalism (1972)

Wilmore’s first foray (since his Pittsburgh days) into the academic world was the publication in 1972 of his second and best-known book, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.¹⁶

He had written this book during a 1970 six-month sabbatical from COCAR, during the brief calm between the storms of the Black Manifesto crisis and the Angela Davis incident.¹⁷ This work was an investigation of the historical roots of the black radicalism of the Black Power era and the ways in which that movement arose, according to Wilmore, out of black religious history. Wilmore was especially interested in demonstrating that the apparently non-religious, or at least non-Christian Black Power movement was not necessarily anti-religious, and in fact grew out of black religious roots. Wilmore also sought to deconstruct stereotypes, held by both non-Christian black radicals and whites, that black religion has historically been quietistic, accommodationist, and otherworldly. Wilmore also argued that black religion is qualitatively different from white religion in that the former sustains a much more fervent and sustained social critique than the latter.

Wilmore examined the strong presence of African religious strains in slave and African American religion, especially as a source of survival and psychological/spiritual sustenance. He explained how enslaved persons reinterpreted white Christianity and turned it against the slave system, especially in the slave revolts of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner. Wilmore interpreted the independent black churches and especially the postbellum development of separate black denominations as the beginnings of a “black church freedom movement,” in terms of freedom from white control. He chronicled black ambivalence about the colonization movement, as well as black enthusiasm for missionary efforts in Africa. He described the “de-radicalization” and accommodationism of some African American Christians due to their socioeconomic mobility, and the “de-Christianization” of some African American radicals, as they reacted against the church’s accommodationism and quietism and turned, instead, to the

Nation of Islam and secular-oriented Black Power associations. Finally, he surveyed the formalization and “renewal” of Black Theology in the 1960s-70s efforts of the NCBC and figures like James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts, including a detailed examination of the Black Manifesto crisis of 1969.

Wilmore successfully made the argument, which seems obvious today but was debated at the time, that there was in fact a distinctive black religious/Christian tradition, rather than simply a black derivative of/variant on white Christianity. He also demonstrated that this tradition had always been countercultural, and that the 1960s countercultural strains in Black Power and black radicalism were therefore not alien to the black church. In terms of the classical poles of accommodation and resistance in black religion, Wilmore preferred to accentuate the latter as the heart of the tradition, as seen in his sustained attention to slave revolts. He implicitly equated black religion and black radicalism, suggesting that radicals were at the center of the tradition and accommodationists at the periphery. The work tended toward hagiography at times. However, that kind of celebratory reading of the heroes of the black religious past was a necessary step for scholarship on the subject. In subsequent editions, of which there have been two (as well as ten printings), Wilmore added some nuance to this celebratory mood, but he remained unapologetic about the fact that he was and is an “activist scholar” who has “never been satisfied merely to study history, but wanted to influence it by passionate involvement in the struggle for the liberation and advancement of black people.”¹⁸ And while he later gave more credence to diversities in African American religion and politics, he maintained that African American religion is “radical” in that its social outlook has been far more critical and sustained than its counterparts in white religion.

In 1982, Oscar McCloud asked Wilmore if he had “any regrets” about the 1963-72 “interruption” in Wilmore’s scholarly career.¹⁹ Wilmore responded,

No, not at all. I feel that I was much the better theologian by having had that experience. I am convinced that one cannot do theology from a library carrel or on a study desk. I think one has to be out in the world to do theology. And I always have thanked God that he gave me an opportunity to take theology, my own theology, into the streets in that period, and to bounce it against the hard realities of the world, of the period 1964 through ’71, ’72.²⁰

Wilmore’s work in founding the NCBC and leading its theological commission from 1966 to 1969 had indeed been theology “in the streets” and among “the hard realities of the world,” an engagement also reflected in his 1970 writing of *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* only a few months after the conclusion of the events constituting the final chapter of that book. He would soon re-enter those “hard realities” - Wilmore was putting the finishing touches on this book around the time that Inyce Bailey became concerned about the treatment of black people going in and out of the Marin County Courthouse.²¹ However, Wilmore also expressed appreciation for the opportunity to take his theology out of “the streets” and into the academy.

I will say also that I felt the need to subject some of the things that I had been doing to more careful academic scrutiny, after 1971, ’72, so that there was a period of immersion in action, and then the need to move back from action to reflect about meaning of action, so I think those two things belong together, you know, action-reflection, and that’s what my career was about, it seems to me, in the 1960s and ‘70s. Involvement in action and then a retreat from action in order to get ready for the next phase.²²

Teaching, Scholarship, and Leadership in Black Church Studies and Theological Education

After leaving COCAR, in the same year as the publication of *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, Gayraud Wilmore began a new career as a full-time theologian and educator, teaching at four different institutions over the following eighteen years, training a new generation

of ministers and theologians. He served in his position at Boston University's School of Theology until 1974.²³ At that point, a deepening interest in African American religious history, piqued by his work on *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, drew him into that field rather than the field of his doctoral training and early teaching.²⁴ In 1974 he became the Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Black Church Studies, with a focus on church history, at Colgate Rochester Divinity School, in Rochester, New York.²⁵ While at Colgate Rochester he and James Cone, who by this point had become Wilmore's close friend and colleague, edited *Black Theology: A Documentary History* (1979).²⁶ Wilmore also published two other books at Colgate Rochester: *Last Things First* (1982) and *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope* (1983).²⁷ In 1983 he left Rochester to become Academic Dean and professor of African American Religious Studies at New York Theological Seminary.²⁸ From 1988 to 1990 he served as professor of Church History at the Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta - the institution which had hosted the NCBC on the occasion of the 1969 promulgation of its "Black Theology Statement."²⁹

In 1990 Wilmore officially retired, but he also stayed on part-time at ITC until 1994 as the editor of the *Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* and of the ITC Press.³⁰ In the 1990s he served as an adjunct professor at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, training students in its Doctor of Ministry program.³¹ He has also served as a visiting professor at ITC, Princeton Theological Seminary, Payne Theological Seminary, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Lutheran Theological Seminary.³² In 1993 Wilmore and Cone released the second volume of *Black Theology: A Documentary History*, and in 2004 Wilmore published *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian*

Faith Through an Africentric Lens.³³ In addition to his five solo-authored books, Wilmore is the co-editor of seven books, and the author of more than eighty articles, book reviews, and book chapters, most of them in the field of black religious studies.³⁴

Wilmore helped found the Pan African Skills Project, the Black Theology Project of “Theology in the Americas,” and the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians.³⁵ He helped found and served as President of the Society for the Study of Black Religion. He served as a board member for the Black Religious Studies Network, as a consultant for the Kelly Miller Smith Institute at Vanderbilt University, and as a member of the Society of Christian Ethics and the American Academy of Religion.³⁶ He was the longtime representative for the Presbyterian Church (USA) on the Standing Commission of the World Council of Churches’ (WCC) Commission on Faith and Order, which involved chairing an international consultation in Geneva in 1983.³⁷ This consultation resulted in the creation of the WCC study, “Racism in Theology and Theology Against Racism.”³⁸ He has served as a contributing editor for *The Christian Century* and *Christianity and Crisis*.³⁹ He is also a life member of the NAACP.⁴⁰

Retirement, Family, and Recognition

The Wilmores moved from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. in 2000.⁴¹ Gayraud’s wife, Lee, passed in 2014, aged ninety-one.⁴² Lee and Gayraud had four children, Steve, Jacques, Roberta, and the youngest, David, who is also now deceased, and as well as several grandchildren.⁴³ Gayraud has continued to write when his health permits. His most recent work, a chapter published in *The Black Church Studies Reader* in 2016, was “Black Church Studies as Advocate and Critic of Black Christian Ecclesial Communities.”⁴⁴ His son, Jacques, lives nearby, and the

two of them enjoy playing chess together.⁴⁵ Eugene G. Turner and J. Oscar McCloud remain among Gayraud's closest friends.⁴⁶ In 1999, Turner edited a book consisting of essays in Gayraud's honor, including contributions by James H. Cone, Delores S. Williams, Catherine Gunsalus Gonzalez, Bryant George, and Desmond M. Tutu.⁴⁷

Gayraud Wilmore has received honorary doctorates from Lincoln College, Tusculum College, Lincoln University, Payne Theological Seminary, General Theological Seminary, and Trinity Lutheran Theological Seminary.⁴⁸ On May 19, 2019, Wilmore received the first honorary doctorate awarded in the 165-year history of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.⁴⁹ This award was presented by Alton B. Pollard III, Louisville's first black President. Pollard arrived in Louisville in 2018, after having served as Dean of the School of Divinity at Howard University - the position once occupied by Wilmore's beloved professor, mentor, and friend, Frank T. Wilson, Sr.⁵⁰ God willing, Wilmore will celebrate his ninety-ninth birthday on December 20, 2020.

Pillar of Cloud, Pillar of Fire, and Solid Black Hyphen

Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. was born and raised amid intersectional conditions of anti-black racial and economic oppression in North Philadelphia during the Great Depression. At age fifteen, he and his family became Presbyterians, helping to found a social gospel black church which was growing and changing as a result of the Great Migration. This new denominational affiliation put Wilmore on the road to Lincoln University, and to a calling - felt while serving as a Buffalo Soldier in an Italian foxhole - to serve in ministry in a majority-white mainline Protestant denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Being a black Presbyterian, however, did not mean that his new church circles were always majority-white. Rather, through McDowell Memorial Community Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, Lincoln University, and Second Presbyterian Church in West Chester, Wilmore discovered black Presbyterianism to be a “church within a church.” This vibrant black church tradition existed within the larger, majority-white world of American Presbyterianism, and, through institutions such as the Presbyterian black caucus, the “Council of the North and West,” would nurture many of the individuals and ideas which would eventually form the religious basis for Black Power and Black Theology.

At Lincoln and in West Chester, Wilmore tried on, for the first time, his persona and strategy of serving as a “solid black hyphen” - as a link between black and white people, but one who never forgot his own blackness, or the economically oppressed black people who had loved, nurtured, and raised him. This new strategy entailed using his “respectable” positions as *Lincolnian* editor and church pastor to defend and provide space for more radical, “disrespectable” activists, many of them “pillars of fire” to Wilmore’s “pillar of cloud.” These activists included the rabble-rousing Lincoln NAACP leaders of the “Operation Oxford” sit-in campaign, James “Deac” Johnson, Milton Henry, and Jacques Wilmore. As “Operation Oxford” bled over into a campaign to desegregate the public schools of West Chester, Pennsylvania, such activists also included the outspoken Bahá’í teacher Helena Robinson and the Quaker war-resister William F. Brinton.

Gayraud Wilmore chose to engage deeply with black Presbyterianism, but he also chose to engage with the majority-white world of mainline denominational leadership, partly in order to attack the heart of the “white problem,” to engage white supremacy in “the belly of the beast,”

the white church. He lived and served in majority-white Protestant spaces through Tanguy Homesteads, the Student Christian Movement, Reinhold Niebuhr's "Christian Action" organization, the Social Education and Action staff of the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church (USA), and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. In 1959 and 1963, respectively, he was chosen by the denomination, in part due to the pressure of black Presbyterians of the Council of the North and West, to assist the church in "catching up with Dr. King," pursuing racial justice through the drafting of the Confession of 1967 (C67) and the executive directorship of the newly formed Commission on Religion and Race. To white Presbyterians, Wilmore seemed an appropriate choice for these positions because of his moderate, apolitical, "hyphenated," "pillar of cloud" reputation. However, black Presbyterians knew him better, through Lincoln University and the "Council of the North and West" black caucus. They knew that this hyphen was solidly black, and that he would uncompromisingly stick by them, and by the cause of racial justice, when the stakes were highest.

On the C67 drafting committee, despite serving as the principal author of the section of that confession which would become the denomination's most forthright denunciation of racism, economic oppression, and militarism to date, Wilmore felt isolated and insufficiently empowered to stir the committee to an even more fervently anti-racist stance. Wilmore's dissatisfaction with the C67 process and product became even more clear to him in retrospect, given the stark disconnect between the Confession's embrace of the term, "reconciliation," and the problematic connotations of that term among African Americans as the 1960s wore on. However, by the time the Black Power movement dawned in 1966, Wilmore's participation in the C67 drafting committee had given him additional tools to use in leading the radical black clergy of the NCBC

to craft a religious, theological interpretation of Black Power, a “‘Barmen Declaration’ of black churchmen,” amid the *status confessionis* of “the repressive and genocidal racism of American society.”⁵¹ These militant black ministers began to form the nucleus of Christian support for the Black Power movement, leading to the proliferation and radicalization of black caucuses in mainline Protestant denominations in the late 1960s, and their “confessional” documents would form the basis for the creation of the world-changing academic field of Black Theology. Black Power, sometimes misunderstood as a largely secular or non-Christian post-script to the supposedly clergy-led Civil Rights Movement, was itself infused with religion, and, in particular, black Christianity. Furthermore, Black Power arose, in part, out of tensions between black and white Christians in mainline Protestant denominations.

As executive director of CORAR, Wilmore was able to marshal effectively the resources of his mainline Protestant denomination, one of the largest, wealthiest, and most influential American religious institutions at the time, in the service of the Civil Rights Movement. However, he only fully realized the depth of his own connection with this movement after the 1965 Watts Rebellion signaled the shift in the field of battle to the burning cities of the American North and West - to slum communities like that of his North Philadelphia childhood home. From then on, he was fighting not just for the rights of black Southerners, but for the survival of his own people. Like Esther, he realized that he had come into his position of power, “for such a time as this.”

Even as Wilmore defended the “pillar of fire” Watts rebels to a white Christian audience, he had begun his own “unmasking,” his own transformation to become an overtly radical, unapologetically black, “pillar of fire” himself. This transformation would become complete with

Wilmore's "second conversion" at the 1967 Black Power Conference in Newark, as he continued to embrace black consciousness and Black Power, and ceased to tolerate white paternalism. He continued to work within a majority-white system, but no longer felt a need to defer to white leaders and colleagues within that system. At the same time, the northern white mainline Protestants who had supported their churches' involvement in racial justice activism in the South in the early 1960s, became uncomfortable with the Black Power phase of the movement, and started "getting off the train."⁵² Racial justice activists moved outside of the South to target white supremacy in the North and West, especially via the Watts, Newark, and Detroit Rebellions, dampening northern white moderate enthusiasm for activism in their own backyards, and leading to a white conservative backlash. The reaction of such northern whites would only grow stronger when the Black Power movement carried its banner into their own churches, charging those institutions - even those mainline Protestant churches which thought they had done enough to "catch up with Dr. King" - with complicity in racial injustice.

When James Forman marched into the mainline "Protestant cathedral," the Riverside Church in the City of New York, to present the Black Manifesto and demand reparations from white religious institutions, just weeks after the 1969 publication of James Cone's earth-shattering first book, *Black Theology and Black Power*, the Christian movement for Black Power had reached its height. The radical black clergy of mainline Protestant denominations and of the NCBC expressed their approval of Forman's reparations demands, shocking their white liberal associates. These white Christians were confused. They could not yet comprehend how their black brethren, erstwhile integrationist "hyphens," now seemed to reject "reconciliation," and to portray these white Christians not as faithful allies but as enemies of racial justice. They were not

prepared for the “solid blackness” of those hyphens. In the words of one white liberal New Jersey Presbyterian at the 1969 General Assembly, “And brothers - I thought were my brothers - do they see in me a white racist, and do I see a revolutionary who wants to tear this country down?”⁵³ However, Gayraud Wilmore was well-positioned once again to interpret and mediate, on his most prominent stage yet, between white Christians and “disrespectable” black radicals. He joined the ministers of the NCBC, as well as white allies, in successfully defending his old associate Forman as a “prophet for our times” whose controversial tactics were as “Christian as street corner revivals and as American as the Fourth of July!”⁵⁴

Wilmore also had the wisdom to recognize the appropriate moments to step aside and allow this “understudy” to “steal the show,” to resist “weakening the force of [Forman’s] program by making it respectable and reasonable by the standards of the status quo.”⁵⁵ Wilmore gained a greater appreciation for Forman’s use of disruptive tactics, which seemed, in some ways, more successful than his own previous efforts, as a “quiet, worried man,” to “gently prod” the denomination toward racial justice while being constantly “sidetracked by the usual bureaucratic procrastination and endless red tape.”⁵⁶ The “fire fight” over the Manifesto, which coupled Forman’s disruptive tactics with Wilmore’s more diplomatic yet still “fiery” interpretive work, was successful in causing the United Presbyterian Church to re-pay African Americans millions of dollars in reparations and provide them with further millions in micro-finance loans.

These funds did not come close to matching what the denomination actually owed to African Americans, based on the benefits it had reaped through slavery and white supremacy. Nevertheless, they were the fruits of one of the most successful efforts for reparations in U.S. history, arising out of the clash between black Christian supporters of Black Power and their

white fellow mainline ministers. As previously noted, this episode demonstrates that Black Power was not simply a separatist withdrawal from or rejection of relationship with white people and institutions. Such withdrawals and rejections were aspects of the movement, but other aspects involved direct confrontation - a more honest, direct, charged relationship - with white people, forcing such people and their institutions to answer for what they had done in the past and were continuing to do to black people. In the Hebrew Bible, when the angel asks Jacob to let him go after wrestling through the night, Jacob responds, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me."⁵⁷ Christian Black Power advocates continued to struggle, refusing to let their white siblings "move on" without providing the blessing which was owed. This legacy, of debts repaid, debts still outstanding, and fraught yet often meaningful relationships, is part of the story of what David Hollinger calls "ecumenical Protestantism," a movement which rose to great heights in the postwar period, yet seems, in the present, day, to have nearly faded away. This story serves as a reminder that the contributions of postwar ecumenical Protestants, including white people and people of color, continue to shape our contemporary world in profound ways, for good and for ill.

As COCAR director, Wilmore was also at the center of another intense "fire fight" as a part of the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements in the UPCUSA. This incident resulted from the denomination's provision of grants for the legal defense of racial justice activists caught up in the criminal justice system, including, in the eyes of many white lay-Presbyterians, the most disrespectable and radical activist yet, the communist and accused (later acquitted) murderer Angela Y. Davis. Despite a massive white backlash to the Davis grant, COCAR was able, through the efforts of Wilmore as well as other courageous white and black Presbyterians

like Edler G. Hawkins, James H. Robinson, Kenneth G. Neigh, and William P. Thompson, to escape the crisis after suffering only a mild rebuke, despite grave long-term consequences for United Presbyterian racial and social justice efforts. The backlash to the Davis grant also signaled to Wilmore that his mainline denomination no longer had the appetite for racial justice activism that it once had - especially as championed by his new persona, uncovered amid the Black Power movement, as a “pillar of fire.” Mainline Protestantism no longer had room for its “solid black hyphen,” who simultaneously, after an energizing experience writing a powerful book on the religious origins of Black Power, recognized his own new calling to join the growing movement for black and other liberationist theologies in the world of theological education.

Despite his departure from denominational leadership, Wilmore remained rooted in his own black Presbyterian identity, and remained affiliated with and committed to his majority-white denomination, as seen in his 1983 authorship of the book, *Black and Presbyterian*. In his teaching career, he laid the groundwork for, and in many cases taught and mentored future black mainline pastors, seminary professors, church executives, and other leaders, especially in the Presbyterian Church (USA), such as current Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson II, former Co-Moderator Denise Anderson, former Executive of the Synod of the Northeast Eugene Turner, former seminary Dean Deborah Flemister Mullen, former seminary President Mark A. Lomax, current seminary presidents Brian K. Blount and Alton B. Pollard, and the late theologian Katie Geneva Cannon. A denomination which recently added the South African anti-apartheid “Belhar Confession” to its *Book of Confessions*, which is studying the possibility of adding to that collection Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from a Birmingham City Jail,” and whose headline

event at its 2018 G.A. in St. Louis was a march to end cash bail, would not exist in the same fashion without the leadership of Gayraud Wilmore.⁵⁸

In the contemporary era, as in the late 1960s, the nation has turned from major breakthroughs in racial justice to a troubling racist backlash, amid dramatic changes in the American religious scene as well as a rekindled call for reparations. Given these conditions, it is critical that historians of Black Power and mainline Protestantism, and as well as historians of American and African American religions in general, attend to the story of the religious Black Power activism of Gayraud Wilmore. Moreover, given such conditions, this story has renewed relevance for all Christians, all Americans, and all who “groan and travail together” for racial justice.

¹ In the epilogue, as in the introduction, when referring generally to the organization Wilmore served from 1963 to 1972, I call it “CORAR” or “the Commission,” rather than “COCAR” or “the Council,” as it was in fact known in the 1967-72 period. When referring to a particular event in the 1967-72 period, I use the latter terminology.

² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

³ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

⁴ Wilmore, “Recollections,” p. 67.

⁵ “Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship,” *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 22, 1972, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries; Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 111.

⁶ “Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship.”

⁷ “Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship.”

⁸ “Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship.”

⁹ “Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship.”

¹⁰ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

¹¹ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, November 28, 2016.

¹² Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

¹³ Romans 8:22 (KJV).

¹⁴ Wilmore, e-mail message to the author, July 31, 2017.

¹⁵ George dates this phrase to the 1972 occasion of Wilmore’s move from COCAR to Boston University, but he attributes the phrase to the 188th General Assembly. The 188th General Assembly occurred in 1976, so George seems to have mistaken either the particular Assembly or the date associated with this language. George, “A Firebell in the Night,” p. 15.

¹⁶ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972).

¹⁷ Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*, p. vii.

¹⁸ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, p. xv.

¹⁹ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²⁰ Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²¹ Wilmore’s six-month sabbatical during which he says he wrote the book was sometime during the year 1970, although the book was not published until 1972. Wilmore probably would not have taken his sabbatical until after the May 1970 General Assembly. Angel Davis was arrested in October 1970, and she was transferred from New York to Marin County on December 22, 1970. St. Andrew Church’s statement was released on December 22, which was received by OECA on January 6, 1971, and discussed by OECA on February 3, 1971. Therefore Inyce Bailey’s concerns likely arose in December 1970 or January 1971.

²² Wilmore and McCloud, “[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording].”

²³ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, pp. 111-112.

²⁴ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, pp. 111-112.

²⁵ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

²⁶ Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979).

²⁷ Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Last Things First* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope* (Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1983).

²⁸ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

²⁹ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

³⁰ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

³¹ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

³² Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

³³ Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone, eds., *Black Theology: A Documentary History: Volume II 1980-1992* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993); Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University, 2004).

³⁴ Seven co-edited books and seventy-nine articles, reviews, and book chapters are listed in a comprehensive 1999 bibliography of Wilmore's writings. He has published at least two more articles in the twenty-first century, both of which are cited elsewhere in this dissertation. Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, pp. 119-123.

³⁵ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, pp. 112-113.

³⁶ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

³⁷ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

³⁸ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

³⁹ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

⁴⁰ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

⁴¹ Turner, *My Life*, p. 121.

⁴² Turner, *My Life*, p. 121.

⁴³ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

⁴⁴ Gayraud S. Wilmore, "Black Church Studies as Advocate and Critic of Black Christian Ecclesial Communities," *The Black Church Studies Reader*, eds. Alton B. Pollard III and Carol B. Duncan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 23-30).

⁴⁵ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 113.

⁴⁶ Turner, *My Life*, pp. 36-38, 117-120, 143-144.

⁴⁷ Turner, *My Life*, p. 38; Eugene G., Turner, ed., *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore* (Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999).

⁴⁸ Turner, *Dissent and Empowerment*, p. 112.

⁴⁹ "Presbyterian theologian and civil rights activist Gayraud S. Wilmore to receive honorary degree from Louisville Seminary," May 15, 2019, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.lpts.edu/about/news/2019/05/15/presbyterian-theologian-and-civil-rights-activist-gayraud-s.-wilmore-to-receive-honorary-degree-from-louisville-seminary>.

⁵⁰ "Our President: Rev. Dr. Alton B. Pollard III," accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.lpts.edu/about/our-leadership/president>.

⁵¹ Wilmore, "The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968)," p. 85.

⁵² Wilmore, Jr., "The Negro Revolt," p. 8; "In Address at Wilson, Dr. C. S. Cilmore [sic] Says Liberals Losing Ability to Lead."

⁵³ Miracle, "Strange Bedfellows," p. 71.

⁵⁴ Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*, p. 160; Wilmore, Jr., *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 12.

⁵⁵ Wilmore, Jr., "The Negro Revolt," p. 11; Wilmore, Jr., *Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*, p. 18.

⁵⁶ McAllister, letter to Wilmore et al, September 9, 1966; Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*, pp. 237-238.

⁵⁷ Genesis 32:24-26 (NRSV).

⁵⁸ "The Belhar Confession," Presbyterian Mission, Presbyterian Church (USA), June 30, 2016, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/belhar-confession/>; Emily Enders Odom, "Assembly moves MLK's 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' toward confessional status," General Assembly News, Presbyterian Church (USA), June 21, 2018, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/6/21/assembly-moves-mlks-letter-birmingham-jail-toward-/>; Greg Allen-Pickett, "Has the church found a new way forward? Bail bond march at General Assembly exemplifies the 'Hands and Feet' initiative," *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 20, 2018, accessed August 25, 2019, <https://pres-outlook.org/2018/06/has-the-church-found-a-new-way-forward-bail-bond-march-at-general-assembly-exemplifies-the-hands-and-feet-initiative/>.

REFERENCES

Personal Correspondence

- Author, the. E-mail message to Robert Doran “Bob” Young, September 18, 2017.
- Boell, Robert Passmore “Bob.” E-mail message to the author, September 26, 2017.
- Durnell, Warner R. E-mail messages to the author, September 16, 2017 and March 29, 2019.
- Tiernan, Susan “Sue.” E-mail messages to the author, September 21 and 27, 2017.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. E-mail messages to the author, November 28 and 30, 2016; January 4, 6, and 21, 2017; February 6, 2017; March 4, 2017; July 31, 2017; September 1 and 16, 2017.
- Young, Robert Doran “Bob.” E-mail messages to the author, September 22, 23, and 24, 2017.

Interviews and Audio/Video Recordings

- Bauer, Richard Waldron and Gayraud S. Wilmore. “Gayraud Wilmore interviewed by R. W. Bauer, 1983, side 1.” Interview recorded at the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly (194th : 1982 : Hartford, Connecticut). Audio cassette. Housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Boell, Robert Passmore “Bob.” Interview by the author. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 26, 2017.
- McCloud, J. Oscar. Interview by the author. Atlanta, Georgia, May 29, 2018.
- Porter, Anderson. Interview by the author. West Chester, Pennsylvania, September 22, 2017.
- Tiernan, Susan “Sue.” Telephone interview by the author. September 27, 2017.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. Interview by the author. Washington, D.C., September 28, 2017.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. and Edward A. Dowey, Jr. “What Do We Hope for in the Remaining Time?” Symposium on the Confession of 1967: Contemporary Implications, October 22, 1982. Audio recording. Recorded in Miller Chapel, Princeton Theological Seminary. Accessed August 18, 2019, <http://commons.ptsem.edu/id/05523>.

- Wilmore, Gayraud S. and Edward M. Huenemann. "Path toward Racial Justice." Symposium on the Confession of 1967: Contemporary Implications, October 22, 1982. Audio recording. Recorded in the Main Lounge, Mackay Campus Center, Princeton Theological Seminary. Accessed August 17, 2019, <http://commons.ptsem.edu/id/05524>.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. and J. Oscar McCloud. "[Interview with] Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. [sound recording]." Interview recorded December 23, 1981 and May 20, 1982 in Rochester, New York. 2 sound cassettes. Housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Wilmore, Jacques. "Jacques Wilmore 1." June 12, 1968. Video recording. Accessed October 6, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2IpRDTW8ZQ>. From the Mississippi Valley Collection at the University of Memphis. Digitized c. 2013, University of Memphis Libraries Preservation and Special Collections Department. This comes from a 27-part interview (approximately 2.5 hours in total) on youtube.
- Wilmore, Jacques. Interview with Jacques E. Wilmore, by David G. Yellin, Bill Thomas, and Carol Lynn Yellin, June 12, 1968. Audio recording. Rhodes College. Accessed August 4, 2019, <https://vimeo.com/281533400>, full reference information at <http://hdl.handle.net/10267/33845>.
- X, Malcolm. "[Conversation with Presbyterian Church executives] [sound recording]." Recorded in 1964 in the Board Room of the Board of National Missions, Interchurch Center, New York, New York. 4 sound tape reels. Housed at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Primary Sources from Lincoln University (Lincoln University, Pennsylvania)

- 1942 Lion, The*. Ed. H. A. B. Jones-Quartey. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Senior Class, Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1942.
- 1947 Lion, The: A Panorama of Campus Life for the Year 1946-47*. Ed. The Senior Class. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania, 1947.
- Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 42, No. 1, January 1941. *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-1941, Announcements for 1941-1942*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 48, No. 1, January 1943. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1942-1943, Announcements for 1943-1944*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 49, No. 1, January 1944. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1943-1944, Announcements for 1944-1945*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 50, No. 1, January 1945. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1944-1945, Announcements for 1945-1946*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 51, No. 1, January 1946. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1945-1946, Announcements for 1946-1947*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 52, No. 1, January 1947. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1946-1947, Announcements for 1947-1948-1949*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincoln University Bulletin, The. Vol. 53, No. 1, January 1949. *The Lincoln University Catalogue, 1948-1949, Announcements for 1949-1950-1951*. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania: The Lincoln University. Bound in *Catalogue of the Lincoln University, 1940-49*.

Lincolnian, The. Articles from the student-run newspaper of Lincoln University. Lincoln University, Pennsylvania.

Wilmore, Gayraud Stephen, Jr., ('47) ('50) S., Jr. Student File. Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5526. This file includes correspondence between members of the Wilmore family and members of the Lincoln faculty and staff, transcripts, admissions applications for college and seminary, financial information, news clippings from the West Chester *Daily Local News*, and Wilmore's pastoral installation bulletin.

Wilmore, Jacques Edward ('50). Student file. Group 9, Box 45, Folder 5527. This file includes correspondence between members of the Wilmore family and members of the Lincoln faculty and staff, transcripts, an admissions application, and financial information.

Primary Sources from the Chester County Historical Society (West Chester, Pennsylvania)

“College Circuit-Rider: Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. - Student Christian Movement Representative.” *Presbyterian Life*, January 8, 1955. “West Goshen Township Churches: Baptist Church, Ministers” folder.

“Gayraud Wilmore, Sr.” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), January 10, 1972. “Wilmore, G.” folder.

“Pastor Calls for Action on Part of Church Today.” *Daily Local News* (West Chester), July 16, 1951. “Presbyterian - Second 1950-1954” folder.

Untitled news clipping. *Coatesville Record*, July 1, 1950. “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder.

Untitled news clipping. *Daily Local News* (West Chester), May 16, 1950. “West Chester Public Schools: West Chester Boro School Board, Directors 1950” folder.

Untitled news clipping. *Daily Local News* (West Chester), November 20, 1951. “West Chester Public Schools: Directors, 1951 (2)” folder.

Untitled news clipping. *Daily Local News* (West Chester), February 19, 1952. “West Chester Public Schools: Directors 1951-1952” folder.

Untitled news clipping. *Daily Local News* (West Chester), February 11, 1965. “Wilmore, G.” folder.

Untitled news clippings. *Daily Local News* (West Chester). “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian - Second 1950-1954” folder.

Untitled news clippings. *Daily Local News* (West Chester). “West Chester Churches: Presbyterian Church - Second, Ministers” folder.

Untitled news clippings. *Daily Local News* (West Chester). “West Chester Public Schools: West Chester Boro School Board, Directors 1951” folder.

Primary Sources from the Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Harbison, Janet. "The Checkerboard World of Gayraud Wilmore, Jr." *Presbyterian Life*, September 1, 1968, pp. 7-9, 33.

"L. A. Riots Broke Out After Police Ruled Out Huge Dance, Cleric Says." *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 18, 1965, p. B19.

"Philadelphian Appointed Martin L. King Professorship." *The Philadelphia Tribune*, April 22, 1972.

"Presbyterian Backs Forman In Church Here." *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, May 12, 1969.

"Presbyterians Urged to Hire More Negroes." *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, June 28, 1966.

"Religious Groups Ask Passage of Civil Rights Bill." *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 8, 1967.

"Rev. G. S. Wilmore, Jr. To Be Ordained Tonight." *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, March 26, 1950.

Wilmore, Gayraud S., Jr. "Housing Bill 'Power Drive' Charged." *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, August 15, 1966.

Primary Sources from the Presbyterian Historical Society (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Church Register of the McDowell [Memorial] Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, The. Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Phila., Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Register, 1937-1938, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M32.

"Correspondence, 1966, 1967, n. d." RG 301.9, Box 2, Folder 20.

"Fifty-Eighth Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, Theme, 'The New Testament Church,' October 10-14, 1951, held in Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)." Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Seventh Series, Vol. III, 1969. Part I: Journal. One Hundred and Eighty-First General Assembly, San Antonio, Texas. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Office of the General Assembly, August, 1969.

Minutes of the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Seventh Series, Vol. IV, 1970. Part I: Journal. One Hundred and Eighty-Second General Assembly, Chicago, Illinois. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Office of the General Assembly, August, 1970.

Minutes of the Meetings of the Presbytery of Chester. Vol. 10. Chester. Presbytery. (Pres. Ch. in the U.S.A.). Minutes & records, 1943-1958, VAULT BX 8958.C47 A3.

Minutes of the Meetings of the General Council of the Presbytery of Chester. Chester. Presbytery. (Pres. Ch. in the U.S.A.) General Council. Minutes, 1945-1952, VAULT BX 8958.C47 A301 v. 2.

Minutes of the One-Hundred-Tenth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. Vol. 110, 1970. Second Presbyterian Church, Memphis, Tennessee, June 14-19, 1970. Richmond, Virginia: General Assembly Publications, 1970.

Minutes of the Session of The McDowell Mem. Community Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia Pa. Book No. 2 - May 1940-April 1950. Philadelphia: The Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Phila. Pa. McDowell Community Pres. Church. Session. Minutes, 1940-1950, VAULT BX 9211.P49121 M31. Includes session and congregational meeting minutes.

McDowell Memorial Community PC (Philadelphia, Pa.), 1872-1939. Folder 120403b. Includes correspondence and financial information.

Moyer, Maurice J. Letter to Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr., April 7, 1964. "Moyer, Maurice Jefferson, letter to Dr. Gayraud S. Wilmore Jr., concerning the Chester demonstrations and civil rights struggle." MS M874c.

Murray, Andrew E. Biographical Vertical File. RG 414, Series I, H5 Murray, Andrew E., 1917-1991.

Murray, Andrew E. Personal diary/journal. 05 0118, 133H, Andrew E. Murray Papers, Box 1 of 2.

“Presbyterian Council, 1899.: The Sixth Annual Meeting of the Colored Presbyterian Council of Ministers and Elders in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and the District of Columbia, will be held in the Washington Street Presbyterian Church, Reading, Pa., Thursday, October 26-29, 1899.” Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

Religion and Race Memos. Issued by the UPCUSA CORAR. RG 503, Box 10, Folder 2. Presbyterian Church in the U.S. Board of Christian Education. Office of Church and Society. Series II, Subject Files, 1947-1980.

“Sixtieth Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-11, 1953, Siloam Presbyterian Church (Brooklyn, New York).” Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

“Sixty-First Annual Session, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 6-10, 1954, St. Mark’s Presbyterian Church (Cleveland, Ohio).” Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

“Sixty-Second Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 5th-9th, 1955, Jethro Presbyterian Church (Atlantic City, New Jersey).” Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

Social Progress. Monthly journal. Division of Social Education and Action of the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church, USA (later the United Presbyterian Church in the USA), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

“Theme: ‘New Life Movement’: The Fifty-Fifth Annual Session of the Presbyterian Council of the North and West, October 7-10, 1948, Washington St. Presbyterian Church (Reading, Pennsylvania).” Annual meeting program, The Presbyterian Council of the North and West. Pres Council of N & W, 112591a 32.

Other Primary Sources

1932 Record, The: Haverford College. Haverford, Pennsylvania: The Senior Class of Haverford College, 1932.

Abernathy, Ralph David. “A Black Preacher Looks at the Black Manifesto.” *The Christian Century* 86, No. 33, August 13, 1969, p. 1064.

Adair, Thelma C. D. "I Remember Edler." *Church & Society*, November/December 1987, pp. 1-9.

Allen-Pickett, Greg. "Has the church found a new way forward? Bail bond march at General Assembly exemplifies the 'Hands and Feet' initiative." *The Presbyterian Outlook*, June 20, 2018. Accessed August 25, 2019, <https://pres-outlook.org/2018/06/has-the-church-found-a-new-way-forward-bail-bond-march-at-general-assemblby-exemplifies-the-hands-and-feet-initiative/>.

"Baha'i World Faith." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 1, 1950, p. 4.

"Balking Episcopal Parishes." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, p. 1306.

"Belhar Confession, The." Presbyterian Mission, Presbyterian Church (USA), June 30, 2016. Accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/belhar-confession/>.

"Black Churchman's Response to the Black Manifesto, A." *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 93-99.

"Black Declaration of Independence: an Advertisement Which Appeared in *The New York Times*, Friday, July 3, 1970." Warner R. Traynham. *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective*. Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 116-119 (Appendix J).

"Black Manifesto, The." *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 80-89.

"'Black Power': A Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966." Warner R. Traynham. *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective*. Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 66-78 (Appendix A).

"Black Power: Statement by the National Committee of Negro Churchmen, July 31, 1966." *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 23-30.

"Black Theology: A Statement of the National Committee of Black Churchmen." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, p. 1310.

- “Black Theology: Statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen, June 13, 1969.” *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 100-102.
- Book of Confessions: Study Edition: Part I of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (USA)*. Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 1996.
- Calhoun, Malcolm. *With Staff in Hand*. Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996.
- Campbell, Ernest T. “The Case for Reparations.” *The Riverside Preachers*. Ed. Stephen H. Phelps. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2012.
- Campbell, Ernest T. *Christian Manifesto*. New York, Harper & Row, 1970.
- Campbell, Ernest T. “An Open Letter to Billy Graham.” *The Riverside Preachers*. Ed. Stephen H. Phelps. Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2012.
- Cave, Clarence L., J. Oscar McCloud, and Robert T. Newbold, Jr.. “The Witness of a Prophet.” *Church & Society*, November/December 1987, pp. 47-59. Accessed August 22, 2019, <http://justiceunbound.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/on-Edler-Hawkins-1987.pdf>.
- “Church and the Urban Crisis, The: Statements from Black and White Caucuses, National Council of Churches Conference on the Church and Urban Tensions, Washington, D.C., September 27-30, 1967.” *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 43-47.
- “College and School News.” *The Crisis*. Vol. 57, no. 10, November 1950, pp. 660-669.
- Cone, James H. *Black Theology & Black Power*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997.
- Cone, James H. “Chapter 11: Martin, Malcolm, and Black Theology.” *Ethical Issues in the Struggles for Justice*. Ed. Daniel Chetti and M. P. Joseph. Cross Junction, Tiruvalla 689 101, Kerala, India: The Christava Sahitya Samiti, 1998. Religion Online, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.religion-online.org/book-chapter/chapter-11-martin-malcolm-and-black-theology-by-james-h-cone/>.
- Cone, James H. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984.
- “Conversation with Edward A. Dowey, A.” *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. Vol. IX, No. 2, 1988, pp. 89-103.

“...and a Crisis of Confidence.” *The New York Times*, February 16, 1967, p. 38.

Davis, Angela. *Angela Davis: An Autobiography*. New York: International Publishers, 1988.

Durnell, Warner R. “Statement of Faith.” Accessed August 9, 2019,
<http://www.presbytery-middle-tennessee.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/statement-of-faith-and-journey-of-faith-warner-durnell.pdf>.

Fey, Harold Edward. “Without Strings.” *The Christian Century* 86, No. 40, October 1, 1969, pp. 1239-1240.

Forman, James. *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*. Washington, D.C.: Open Hand Publishing, 1985.

Fry, John R. *The Trivialization of the United Presbyterian Church*. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.

George, Bryant. “A Firebell in the Night.” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*. Ed. Eugene G. Turner. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999.

Ginger, Ann Fagan, ed. *Angela Davis Case Collection: Annotated Procedural Guide and Index*. Berkeley, California: Meiklejohn Civil Liberties Institute, 1974.

Goetz, Ronald G. “Black Manifesto: The Great White Hope.” *The Christian Century* 86, No. 25, June 18, 1969, pp. 832-833.

Haas, Al. “Dr. McIntire Stands in the Rain to Answer ‘Manifesto.’” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 21, 1969. Accessed April 28, 2016,
<http://www.carlmcintire.org/newspapers-inquirer-690721.php>.

Handler, M. S. “Wilkins Accuses Powell of Apathy.” *The New York Times*, January 14, 1967, p. 29.

Hessel, Dieter T. and Everett L. Perry, eds. *The White Problem*. The United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, 1970.

Hoyt, Thomas L., Jr., “The Ecumenical Legacy of Gayraud Wilmore: A Tribute to a Mentor.” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*. Ed. Eugene G. Turner. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999, pp. 55-65.

- “In Address at Wilson, Dr. C. S. Cilmore [sic] Says Liberals Losing Ability to Lead.” *Public Opinion*, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, November 6, 1963, p. 1.
- Kelsey, George D. “The Christian Way in Race Relations.” *The Christian Way in Race Relations*. Ed. William Stuart Nelson. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1948.
- Kelsey, George D. *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*. New York: Scribner, 1965.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., “Address by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Aug 21, 1965” Malcolm Calhoun. *With Staff in Hand*. Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 256-273.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. ““Desegregation and the Future’ Address Delivered at the Annual Luncheon of the National Committee for Rural Schools.” New York, New York, December 15, 1956? Accessed August 17, 2019, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/desegregation-and-future-address-delivered-annual-luncheon-national-committee>. Question mark present in original date to indicate that it is an estimate.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies, 1978, pp. 9-10.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham City Jail.” *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Ed. James M. Washington. New York: Harper & Row, 1986.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr. “Letter from Birmingham Jail - April 16, 1963.” *African American Religious History: A Documentary Witness*, 2nd ed. Ed. Milton C. Sernett. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1999.
- Kuhn, Maggie. *No Stone Unturned: The Life and Times of Maggie Kuhn*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1991.
- Lara-Braud, Jorge. “Hispanic-Americans and the Crisis in the Nation,” 1969. *The Presbyterian Experience in the United States: A Sourcebook*. Ed. William Yoo. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, pp. 155-162.
- Lewis, John. “Speech at the March on Washington,” August 28, 1963. Accessed August 17, 2019, <https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/lewis-speech-at-the-march-on-washington-speech-text/>.
- Lewis, John with Michael D’Orso. *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1998.

Lomax, Mark. "Reparations: Getting to the Ground Level." *Horizons* 17, No. 7, December 2004.

Long, Michael G. *I Must Resist: Bayard Rustin's Life in Letters*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012.

"Malcolm X at U.C. Berkeley (October 11, 1963)." Accessed August 17, 2019, <http://malcolmxfiles.blogspot.com/2013/06/uc-berkeley-october-11-1963.html>.

Michael, Tom. "The March to Montgomery, 1965," January 18, 2015. Accessed August 17, 2019, <https://annemichael.wordpress.com/2015/01/18/guest-blogger-memoir/>.

"Minutes of the Session of the Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pa." *Session Book No. 3, Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pa.* Philadelphia: Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. West Chester, Pa. Westminster Pres. Church. Session minutes. V MI46 W522s v. 3 1945-1962. Housed at Westminster Presbyterian Church, West Chester, Pennsylvania.

"National Committee of Black Churchmen's Response to the Black Manifesto, The." *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 90-92.

Niebuhr, Reinhold. *Moral Man & Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001.

Odom, Emily Enders. "Assembly moves MLK's 'Letter from a Birmingham Jail' toward confessional status." *General Assembly News, Presbyterian Church (USA)*, June 21, 2018. Accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2018/6/21/assembly-moves-mlks-letter-birmingham-jail-toward-/>.

Penfield, Janet Harbison. "On the Road to C-67." *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*. Vol. IX, No. 2, 1988, pp. 104-108.

"People." *Jet*. Vol. 55, No. 23, February 22, 1979, p. 22.

"Presbyterian theologian and civil rights activist Gayraud S. Wilmore to receive honorary degree from Louisville Seminary," May 15, 2019. Accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.lpts.edu/about/news/2019/05/15/presbyterian-theologian-and-civil-rights-activist-gayraud-s.-wilmore-to-receive-honorary-degree-from-louisville-seminary>.

"Racism and the Elections: The American Dilemma, 1966." *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Ed. Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979, pp. 31-34.

- Ramage, David. "A Forward." Gayraud S. Wilmore, Jr. *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*. New York: United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1969, pp. 2-3.
- "Riverside Pastor Responds to McIntire Manifesto." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 40, October 1, 1969, p. 1241.
- Robinson, James H. *Road Without Turning: The Story of Reverend James H. Robinson, An Autobiography*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Company, 1950.
- Rollins, J. Metz, Jr. "As the Black Community Sees It." *The White Problem*. Ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Everett L. Perry. The United Presbyterian Church and the United Church of Christ, 1970, pp. 5-13.
- Schomer, Howard. "The Manifesto and the Magnificat." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 26, June 25, 1969, p. 867.
- Scott, Anne Firor, ed. *Pauli Murray & Caroline Ware: Forty Years of Letters in Black and White*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006.
- Stotts, Jack L. "UPUSA Challenged in San Antonio." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 25, June 18, 1969, pp. 855-856.
- Stringfellow, William. "Reparations: Repentance as a Necessity to Reconciliation." *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*. Ed. Robert S. Lecky and H. Elliott Wright. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969, pp. 52-64.
- Swift, David E. *Black Prophets of Justice: Activist Clergy Before the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.
- Thompson, Ernest Trice. *The Spirituality of the Church: A Distinctive Doctrine of the Presbyterian Church in the United States*. Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1961.
- Thurman, Howard. "The Will to Segregation." *A Strange Freedom: The Best of Howard Thurman on Religious Experience and Public Life*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. Essay originally published 1943.
- Timothy, Mary. *Jury Woman: The story of the trial of Angela Y. Davis - written by a member of the jury*. San Francisco and Palo Alto, California: Glide Publications and Emty Press, 1975.
- Traynham, Warner R. *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective*. Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973.

- Turner, Eugene. *My Life... A Story of Love, Hope, Faith and Family*. Suches, Georgia: Georgia Mountain Publishing, LLC, 2016.
- Watts, Leon W., II. "The National Committee of Black Churchmen." *Christianity and Crisis* 30, 1970, pp. 237-243.
- Williams, Preston N. "The Atlanta Document: An Interpretation." *The Christian Century* 86, No. 42, October 15, 1969, pp.1311-12.
- Willie, Charles V. "The Black Manifesto and the Response of the Church." *Episcopal News Service*, August 11, 1969.
- Wilmore, Gayraud. Letter to Mrs. Dorothea Murray, October 16, 1991.
- Wilmore, Gayraud. "Reparations: Don't Hang Up on a Word." *Theology Today* 26, No. 3, October 1969, pp. 105-106.
- Wilmore, Gayraud. "Second Address: 'Racism - Some Historical and Theological Considerations of the American Situation,' August 20, 1965." Malcolm Calhoun. *With Staff in Hand*. Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 252-253.
- Wilmore, Gayraud. "Sermon at Christian Action Conference, Montreat, North Carolina, August 19, 1965." Malcolm Calhoun, *With Staff in Hand*. Laurinburg, North Carolina: St. Andrews College Press, 1996, pp. 248-252.
- Wilmore, Gayraud. "Selma: Memories and an Exhortation." *Christianity and Crisis* 50, No. 3, May 5, 1990, pp. 51-52.
- Wilmore, Gayraud, Jr. "The New Commission on Race: What Exactly Was Launched?" *Presbyterian Life*, November 15, 1963, pp. 25-26.
- Wilmore, Gayraud Jr. "The New Negro and the Church." *The Christian Century*, February 6, 1963, pp. 168-171.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Black Church Studies as Advocate and Critic of Black Christian Ecclesial Communities." *The Black Church Studies Reader*. Ed. Alton B. Pollard III and Carol B. Duncan. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, pp. 23-30.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope*. Revised ed. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1998.

- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black and Presbyterian: The Heritage and the Hope*. Philadelphia: Geneva Press, 1983.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Custodians of the gospel of liberation." *Journal of Presbyterian History*. Vol. 90, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2012, pp. 23-24.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "L.A.: peace or pacification." *Christianity and Crisis* 52, No. 8, May 25, 1992, pp. 163-164.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Last Things First*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith through an Africentric Lens*. New York: New York University, 2004.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Realism and Hope in American Religion and Race Relations." *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*. Ed. Eugene G. Turner. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999, pp. 97-110.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Recollections: The Black Revolt and the United Presbyterian Church, 1963-1973." *The Journal of Presbyterian History*. Vol. 85, No. 1, Spring/Summer 2007, pp. 57-69.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. *The Secular Relevance of the Church*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "The Theological Commission Project of the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Fall 1968)." Warner R. Traynham. *Christian Faith in Black and White: A Primer in Theology from the Black Perspective*. Wakefield, Massachusetts: Parameter Press, Inc., 1973, pp. 83-96 (Appendix D).
- Wilmore, Gayraud S., Jr. "Brotherhood Month, 1963." *Perspective*, pp. 4-5. This is a publication of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S., Jr. *The Church's Response to the Black Manifesto*. New York: United Presbyterian Church, USA, 1969.

Wilmore, Gayraud S., Jr. "Crisis in Civil Rights." *The New York Times*. Signed February 27, 1967, published March 5, 1967.

Wilmore, Gayraud S. and James H. Cone, eds. *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1979.

Wilmore, Gayraud S. and James H. Cone, eds. *Black Theology: A Documentary History: Volume II 1980-1992*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1993.

Wilmore, Gayraud S. and Curtis A. Jones. "Race, Remembrance and the New Charge: A Dialogue Between Two Generations of Black Presbyterians." *Church & Society*. Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 48-58.

Winter, Gibson. *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961.

Secondary Sources

"African American Executives in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.): Warner Robert Durnell." *Periscope 4: African American Presbyterians - Living into the 21st Century: Breakthroughs and Challenges, 197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004*. Racial Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004, pp. 49-50.

All-Black Governing Bodies: The History and Contributions of All-Black Governing Bodies in the Predecessor Denominations of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Louisville, Kentucky: The Office of the General Assembly, 1996.

Alvis, Joel L. *Religion & Race: Southern Presbyterians, 1946-1983*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1994.

Asante, Molefi Kete. *Maulana Karenga: An Intellectual Portrait*. Malden, Massachusetts, Polity Press, 2009.

Azaransky, Sarah. *The Dream is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Bailey, Julius H. "National Conference of Black Churchmen." *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations*. Ed. Nina Mjagkij. New York: Garland Publishing, 2001, p. 380.

- Bass, Dorothy C. "Ministry on the Margin: Protestants and Education," *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*. Ed. William R. Hutchison. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 48-71.
- Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the "Letter from Birmingham Jail."* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001.
- "Biography: Reverend Gayraud Wilmore." *The HistoryMakers*, June 21, 2004. Accessed October 12, 2017, <http://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-gayraud-wilmore>.
- Birnbaum, Emily. "John Lewis urges young activists to get into 'good trouble' to save democracy." *The Hill*, June 5, 2018. Accessed March 25, 2019, <https://thehill.com/blogs/in-the-know/390901-john-lewis-urges-young-activists-to-get-into-good-trouble-to-save-democracy>.
- "Black Power Conference, The/" Accessed June 11, 2019, <http://riseupnewark.com/chapters/chapter-3/part-3/the-black-power-conference/>.
- Blockson, Charles L. *The Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania*. Quantico, Virginia: Flame International, 1981.
- Brackenridge, R. Douglas. *Eugene Carson Blake, Prophet with Portfolio*. New York: Seabury Press, 1978.
- Butler, Anthea. Presentation as a part of a panel. "Discussion of Grant Wacker, *America's Pastor: Billy Graham and the Shaping of a Nation* (Harvard, 2014)." American Society of Church History Winter Meeting, Atlanta, Georgia, January 9, 2016.
- Carson, Clayborne. "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the African-American Social Gospel." *African-American Christianity: Essays in History*. Ed. Paul E. Johnson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994, pp. 161-163.
- Chappell, David L. *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.
- Cline, David F. *From Reconciliation to Revolution: The Student Interracial Ministry, Liberal Christianity, and the Civil Rights Movement*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017.
- Conser, Walter H., Jr., and Robert J. Cain. *Presbyterians in North Carolina: Race, Politics, and Religious Identity in Historical Perspective*. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 2012.

“CPS Worker 001084 - Brinton, William F.” *Living Peace in a Time of War: The Civilian Public Service Story*. The Mennonite Central Committee, 2015. Accessed August 11, 2019, <http://civilianpublicservice.org/workers/1084>.

Cressler, Matthew J. *Authentically Black and Truly Catholic: The Rise of Black Catholicism in the Great Migration*. New York: New York University Press, 2017.

“David Everett Swift.” *The Hartford Courant*, October 17, 2001. Accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/hartfordcourant/obituary.aspx?n=david-everett-swift&pid=110948>.

“Della Virginia Stonewall Durnell, March 23, 1929-May 10, 2013.” DeBaptiste Funeral Homes, Inc. - West Chester, May 2013. Accessed August 9, 2019, <https://www.debaptiste.com/obituary/6299594>.

D’Emilio, John. *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin*. New York: Free Press, 2003.

Dickerson, Dennis C. *African American Preachers and Politics: The Careys of Chicago*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2010.

Dickerson, Dennis C. *Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young, Jr.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

Donius, Mary Mulkerin. “Trailblazer.” *The Boston Globe*, April 23, 2006, p. 59.

Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: Penguin Books, 1996.

Dudziak, Mary L. *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Dyer, Ervin. “Obituary: The Rev. LeRoy Patrick/ Central figure in fighting racism in Pittsburgh, Nov. 17, 1915-Jan. 12, 2006.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 12, 2006. Accessed August 16, 2019, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/obituaries/2006/01/13/Obituary-The-Rev-LeRoy-Patrick-Central-figure-in-fighting-racism-in-Pittsburgh/stories/200601130225>.

“Ethel Closson of West Chester.” *Daily Local News*, April 26, 2007. Accessed August 11, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/46715209>.

“Ethel Young Closson, April 22, 2007.” DeBaptiste Funeral Homes, Inc. - West Chester. Accessed August 11, 2019, http://www.debaptiste.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1559722.

- Evans, Curtis J. *A Theology of Brotherhood: The Federal Council of Churches and the Problem of Race*. New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming.
- Farmer, James Oscar, Jr. *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values*. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986.
- Findlay, Jr., James F. *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Friedland, Michael B. *Lift Up Your Voice Like a Trumpet: White Clergy and the Civil Rights and Antiwar Movements, 1954-1973*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Gerstle, Gary. *American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- “Ghana Trip: Event, March 4, 1957 to March 12, 1957.” The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, Stanford University. Accessed August 15, 2019, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/ghana-trip>.
- Gill, Jill K. *Embattled Ecumenism: The National Council of Churches, the Vietnam War, and the Trials of the Protestant Left*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011.
- Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008.
- Gonzalez, Catherine Gunsalus. “The Quest for Holiness.” *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*. Ed. Eugene G. Turner. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999.
- Halberstam, David. *The Children*. New York: Random House, 1998.
- Hall, Jacquelyn Dowd. “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past.” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 91, No. 4, March 1, 2005, pp. 1233-1263.
- Hart, D. G. *Recovering Mother Kirk: The Case for Liturgy in the Reformed Tradition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003.
- Harvey, Jennifer. *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014.

- Harvey, Paul. *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005.
- Haynes, Stephen. *The Last Segregated Hour: The Memphis Kneel-Ins and the Campaign for Southern Church Desegregation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Heyrman, Christine Leigh. *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.
- Heuser, Fred. "Rollins and Wilmore." *Presbyterian Historical Society* blog, February 16, 201. Accessed August 17, 2019, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/rollins-and-wilmore>.
- "Historical Overview (Excerpts Selected from the 1988 Mission Design)." National Black Presbyterian Caucus, 2018. Accessed April 24, 2019, <https://nationalnbpc.org/historical-overview/>.
- Holifield, E. Brooks. *The Gentlemen Theologians: American Theology in Southern Culture, 1795-1860*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1978.
- Hollinger, David A. *After Cloven Tongues of Fire: Protestant Liberalism in Modern American History*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Hudnut-Beumler, James. *Looking for God in the Suburbs: The Religion of the American Dream and Its Critics, 1945-1965*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1994.
- Hurst, David. "Wilmore's history probed; Local town founded by ex-slave in 1805." *The Tribune-Democrat*, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, February 28, 2016. Accessed October 6, 2017. http://www.tribdem.com/news/wilmore-s-history-probed-local-town-founded-by-ex-slave/article_9ee31188-de96-11e5-a33b-9fb872d7d226.html.
- Hutchison, William R., ed. *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Iosso, Christian T. "The Hope and Challenge of Reconciliation: A Call to Reclaim the Confession of 1967." *Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 3-8.
- Itkowitz, Colby. "How Jane Fonda's 1972 trip to North Vietnam earned her the nickname, 'Hanoi Jane.'" *The Washington Post*, September 21, 2018. Accessed August 23, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/09/18/how-jane-fondas-1972-trip-to-north-vietnam-earned-her-the-nickname-hanoi-jane/>.

- Jacobson, Lisa. "Remembering Mr. Rogers." *Presbyterian Historical Society Blog*, February 11, 2013. Accessed August 15, 2019, <https://www.history.pcusa.org/blog/remembering-mr-rogers>.
- Johnson, Sylvester A. *African American Religions, 1500-2000: Colonialism, Democracy, and Freedom*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Joseph, Peniel E. *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006.
- Karenga, Tiamoyo. "Maulana Karenga (1941-)." *BlackPast*, February 12, 2007. Accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/karenga-maulana-c-1943/>.
- Kilson, Martin. *Transformation of the African American Intelligentsia, 1880-2012*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Kittell, Ferdinand. *Souvenir of Loretto Centenary, October 10, 1899: 1799-1899*. Cresson, Pennsylvania: Swope Bros., Printers, January 1, 1899.
- Kruse, Kevin M. *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.
- Lecky, Robert S. and H. Elliott Wright, eds. *Black Manifesto: Religion, Racism, and Reparations*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969.
- "Leonard S. Closson Sr." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1977, p. 5. Accessed August 11, 2019, https://www.newspapers.com/clip/16932048/bahai_leonard_closson_obit/.
- Lepore, Jill. "Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography." *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 88, No. 1, June 2001, pp. 129-144.
- Lockwood, Logan. "1967 Newark Black Power Conference," April 19, 2017. Accessed June 11, 2019, <http://blackpower.web.unc.edu/2017/04/1967-newark-black-power-conference/>.
- Lutz, Jack. *The Poor Richard Club: Its Birth, Growth and Activities, and its Influence on Advertising, the City, State and Nation*. Philadelphia: The Poor Richard Club, 1953.
- Lyon, Carter Dalton. *Sanctuaries of Segregation: The Story of the Jackson Church Visit Campaign*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 2017.
- Manis, Andrew Michael. *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

- Manos, Jan. *Westminster Presbyterian Church of West Chester, Pennsylvania 1892-1992: Its History, Its People*.
- Marable, Manning. *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945-2006*. 3rd ed. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007.
- Marbury, Herbert Robinson. *Pillars of Cloud and Fire: The Politics of Exodus in African American Biblical Interpretation*. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Marriott, Michel. "Muhammad Kenyatta, 47, Dies; Professor and Civil Rights Leader." *The New York Times*, January 6, 1992, p. B10. Accessed August 22, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/01/06/nyregion/muhammad-kenyatta-47-dies-professor-and-civil-rights-leader.html>.
- Marsh, Charles. *God's Long Summer: Stories of Faith and Civil Rights*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997.
- McGuire, Danielle L. *At The Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance - a New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 2010.
- McKee, Elsie Anne and Brian G. Armstrong, eds. *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey, Jr.* Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1990.
- Mead Frank S., et al. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. 12th ed. Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2005.
- Miller, Florence Sechler. *A Legacy of Learning: The History of the West Chester Area Schools*. West Chester, Pennsylvania: West Chester Area School District, 1994.
- Mills, Kay. *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. New York: Dutton, 1993.
- Miracle, Amy L. "Strange Bedfellows: The United Presbyterian Church and the Black Power Movement." B.A. Thesis. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 1985.
- Moise, Betsi. "Grace Jenkintown Welcomes Members from First African Presbyterian Church." *Presbytery of Philadelphia*, February 1, 2018. Accessed August 22, 2019, <https://presbyphl.org/grace-jenkintown-welcomes-members-first-african-presbyterian-church/>.
- "Rev. Dr. Maurice J. Moyer." *Congo Funeral Home*, 2012. Accessed August 4, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140306181005/http://obit.congofuneralhome.com/obitdisplay.html?id=1039969&listing=Current>.

- Mullen, Deborah Flemister. *Bound Together in Christ's Name?: United Presbyterians and Racial Justice: "The Angela Davis Affair" 1967 to 1972*. Chicago: University of Chicago Divinity School, 2003.
- Murray, Andrew E. *Presbyterians and the Negro - A History*. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1966.
- "Obituaries: Janet G. H. Penfield." *Town Topics*, Princeton, New Jersey, Vol. LVIII, No. 4, January 28, 2004. Accessed August 17, 2019, <http://www.towntopics.com/jan2804/obits.html>.
- "Our President: Rev. Dr. Alton B. Pollard III." Accessed August 25, 2019, <https://www.lpts.edu/about/our-leadership/president>.
- Paris, Peter J., John W. Cook, James Hudnut-Beumler, Lawrence H. Mamiya, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, and Judith Weisenfeld. *The History of the Riverside Church in the City of New York*. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Parker, J. A. *Angela Davis: The Making of a Revolutionary*. New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973.
- Parr, Patrick. *The Seminarian: Martin Luther King, Jr. Comes of Age*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2018.
- Pimblott, Kerry. *Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016.
- Pinn, Anthony B. *Becoming "America's Problem Child": An Outline of Pauli Murray's Religious Life and Theology*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2008.
- Podair, Jerald. *Bayard Rustin: American Dreamer*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2009.
- Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Reid, Margaret Ann. "Waters Turpin (1910-1968)." *Oxford Reference*. Accessed August 4, 2019, <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803110315860>.
- "Reverend Joseph Metz Rollins." *The HistoryMakers*, September 14, 2007. Accessed August 17, 2019, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-joseph-metz-rollins>.

- Roberts, Paul. "Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary: History, impact, future." *The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 12, 2018. Accessed August 19, 2019, <https://pres-outlook.org/2018/12/johnson-c-smith-theological-seminary-history-impact-future/>.
- Rosenberg, Rosalind. *Jane Crow: The Life of Pauli Murray*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Salzberger, Ronald P. and Mary C. Turck, eds. *Reparations for Slavery: A Reader*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.
- Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr. "Reinhold Niebuhr's Role in Political Thought." *Reinhold Niebuhr; His Religious Social, and Political Thought*. Ed. Charles W. Kegley. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, pp. 190-214.
- Schuchter, Arnold. *Reparations: The Black Manifesto and Its Challenge to White America*. New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1970.
- Shattuck, Gardiner H. *Episcopalians and Race: Civil War to Civil Rights*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000.
- Sitkoff, Harvard. *The Struggle for Black Equality*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2008.
- Spencer, Robyn C. *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016.
- Stone, Ronald H. *Professor Reinhold Niebuhr: A Mentor to the Twentieth Century*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 1992.
- Sullivan, Robert. "The Ministry of Mr. Rogers." *The New York Review of Books*. Vol. LXVI, No. 1, January 17, 2019, pp. 21-23.
- TeSelle, Eugene. "C67 - Witness and Conflict." *Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 41-47.
- Tessein, Carol. "Alfred Gardner 'Apples' Wilmore." *Find A Grave*, October 11, 2012. Accessed October 6, 2017, <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=98689913>.
- Townes, Emilie M. "Womanist Theology." *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*. Ed. Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Radford Ruether. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006, pp. 1165-1173.
- Turner, Eugene G., ed. *Dissent and Empowerment: Essays in Honor of Gayraud Wilmore*. Louisville, Kentucky: Witherspoon Press, 1999.

- Walker-McWilliams, Marcia. *Reverend Addie Wyatt: Faith and the Fight for Labor, Gender, and Racial Equality*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016.
- Weisenfeld, Judith. *New World A-Coming: Black Religion and Racial Identity During the Great Migration*. New York: New York University Press, 2016.
- Wild, Mark. *Renewal: Liberal Protestants and the American City After World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019.
- Wilkinson, John. "Edward A. Dowey, Jr., and the Making of the Confession of 1967." *The Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 82, No. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 5-22.
- Wilkinson, John. "The Making of the Confession of 1967." *Church & Society*, Vol. 92, No. 5, May/June 2002, pp. 26-40.
- "Will Herberg, 75, Ex-Professor at Drew University." *The Washington Post*, March 29, 1977. Accessed August 15, 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1977/03/29/will-herberg-75-ex-professor-at-drew-university/6c8f72f4-9d3f-46ce-a3a3-b5826707a5a8/?utm_term=.154467d3c55a.
- Williams, Shannen Dee. *Subversive Habits: Black Nuns and the Struggle to Desegregate Catholic America after World War I*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, forthcoming.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Identity and Integration: Black Presbyterians and Their Allies in the Twentieth Century." *The Presbyterian Predicament: Six Perspectives*. Ed. Milton J. Coalter et al. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.
- Wilmore, Gayraud S. "Chronology of Establishment of Black Presbyterian Organizations." *Periscope 4: African American Presbyterians - Living into the 21st Century: Breakthroughs and Challenges, 197 Years of Ministry, 1807-2004*,. Racial Ministry Unit, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2004, p. 17.
- "Jacques Wilmore." *Legacy.com*, April 28, 2007. Accessed October 6, 2017, <http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/philly/obituary.aspx?n=jacques-wilmore&pid=87595107>.
- Wilson, Frank T., ed. "Living Witnesses: Black Presbyterians in Ministry." *Journal of Presbyterian History*, Vol. 51, No. 4, Winter 1973, pp. 347-391.

Wilson, Frank T., Sr. ed. *Black Presbyterians in Ministry*. New York: Consulting Committee on Ethnic Minority Ministries, Vocation Agency, United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., 1978.

Winbush, Robina Marie. "She dared to say yes: A Reflection on Katie Geneva Cannon." *The Presbyterian Outlook*, December 3, 2018, pp. 22-26.

Winchester, Dick. "History Minute for September 26, 2004: Richard J. Oman Comes to O.P.C." *The History Minutes, Presented Weekly During the 250th Anniversary, Oxford Presbyterian Church, 1754-2004*, pp. 47-48.

Wuthnow, Robert. *The Restructuring of American Religion*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988.

Zenz, Cassandra. "Milton A. Galamison (1923-1988)." *BlackPast*, September 11, 2019. Accessed August 4, 2019, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/galamison-milton-1923-1988/>.