

DR. CURTIS EVANS ON HIS BOOK, *A THEOLOGY OF BROTHERHOOD*

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KYLE ROBERTS: Happy Juneteenth, everyone.

My name is Kyle Roberts, and I'm the Executive Director of the Congregational Library & Archives. Welcome to today's virtual book talk, "A Theology of Brotherhood: The Federal Council of Churches and the Problem of Race," with Dr. Curtis J. Evans.

To begin, I want to acknowledge that the Congregational Library & Archives resides in what is now known as Boston, which is in the Place of the Blue Hills, the homeland of the Massachusetts people, whose relationships and connections with the land continue to this day and into the future.

For those of you joining us for the first time, the Congregational Library & Archives is an independent research library. Established in 1853, the CLA's mission is to foster a deeper understanding of the spiritual, intellectual, cultural, and civic dimensions of the Congregational story and its ongoing relevance in the 21st century.

We do this through free access to our research library of over 225,000 books, pamphlets, periodicals, and manuscripts, and our digital archive, which at the end of this summer will have more than 130,000 images in it, many drawn from our New England's Hidden Histories project.

Throughout the year, we offer educational programs and research fellowships for students, scholars, churches, and anyone interested in the Congregational story and its influence on the American story. Please do check our website, congregationallibrary.org, to learn more about what we do and for news of forthcoming events.

And with that, please allow me to introduce our speaker. Curtis J. Evans is Associate Professor of American Religions and History of Christianity at the University of Chicago Divinity School. He is the author of "The Burden of Black Religion," and as you will hear today, he is the author of this fantastic new work, "A Theology of Brotherhood."

With that, I'll hand it over to you, Curtis. Thank you.

CURTIS EVANS: Welcome, everyone.

I wanted to do two things today. I won't presume that anyone has read the book, even though I encourage you to purchase and read the book.

I want to talk about George Haynes, just as a way of sort of introducing a key figure, even though this is certainly not a biography. And then say a bit about the implications of my book, *A Theology of Brotherhood*.

So in a 1932 speech, George Edmund Haynes, who was the Executive Director of the Federal Council of Churches' Department of Race Relations, talked about what he called the emotional and moral power of religion for social change. After carefully laying out the various approaches the FCC had taken to address racial oppression in the US, Haynes wrote that he had tried to, "unite social engineering based upon careful scientific research and survey, with the emotional enthusiasm and moral power of religious motivation," to achieve their objectives.

The appeal to emotional enthusiasm and moral power reflected an awareness of the powerful force of religious commitment. However, Haynes did find compelling reasons to wed social science and Christian faith. Sometimes he spoke of them as intertwined, and at other times he spoke of Christian and humanitarian forces working side by side and promoting cooperative race relations. Haynes also utilized motifs from suffering and sacrifice, from the Christian tradition to incite Christians to action in the face of hardship and difficulty in their collective attempts to deal with the problem of race in American society in the early 20th century.

Always rather sanguine and optimistic about the power of Christianity, ultimately to conquer racial prejudice, Haynes has been criticized precisely on this point. As one author has argued about Haynes' view of interracial exchanges, I'm quoting here, "most examples of use by Haynes displayed an incredibly optimistic view of the capacity of whites to change their prejudices, underlying what might be judged to be a naive estimation of the racial barriers erected by prejudice."

I just want to say as a side note, I tried to address this, even if somewhat indirectly, in the book, this question about how overly optimistic Haynes was.

In July 1937, Haynes spelled out what he believed to be the crux of the interracial problem in the United States. He argued that, "uprooting of old evils and customs that new conditions have made intolerable and changing the inferior/superior attitudes are among our greatest national problems." He believed that altering the practices and conditions of everyday relationships between white and black people was essential to modifying these inherited customs and attitudes.

For Haynes, then, practices preceded ideas and attitudes. Even so, he argued that these worked in a rather circular fashion. Here I quote him again: "as we change the practices of

everyday relationships, our ideas and attitudes will change, and as our inferiority/superiority customs and attitudes are modified, the effect changes in our everyday practices.”

Thus relations or relationships were at the center of altering the interracial problem in America. Haynes noted that there were areas of everyday life where race relations had become fixed in past generations, and therefore they required specific attention in order to be changed in the present context. These included relationships on farms and plantations, in industrial relationships, in politics and civic life, and in churches and religious institutions.

Although the FCC’s Department of Race Relations targeted all of these areas in some form, Haynes gave special attention to churches, which had, in his view, a unique function and opportunity to deal with this basic interracial situation. This emphasis on concrete, personal relations and practices distinguished Haynes’ program to modify accumulated customs and attitudes of racial discrimination and prejudice.

His brainchild, Race Relations Sunday, was a central part of his project to realize racial brotherhood within the churches and to undermine persisting racial prejudice, prejudices about Christians. Race Relation Sundays were held once a year, beginning in 1923. Yet as important as it was, Race Relations Sunday was only one plank in achieving the goal of improving race relations, supplemented with interracial clinics or workshops beginning in 1943, race relations committees in local cities, and various national conferences to address the problem of race.

Race Relations Sunday was also the major holiday in the FCC’s tendency to sacralize the year with new holidays that supplemented traditional Christian holidays. There was an explicit and implicit liturgy in these holidays. They incorporated Christian brotherhood into the very worship and practice of the Christian year. They regularly reminded Christians of their communal identity as people from all races committed in their common worship of one God revealed in Jesus Christ, who broke down the artificial barriers that formerly separated the races. These holidays also included rituals of repentance, confession, and calls for divine judgment, reminding the nation and the people of God that mob violence and racial oppression were blatant assault upon the ideals of Christian brotherhood and equality in the family of God. And these were evident, especially, in the FCC’s anti-lynching campaign.

In this way, Race Relations Sunday, and its supplementary and accompanying celebrations and holidays, stood as the central tool to attempt to realize Christian brotherhood in churches and to resacralize an old Christian year that now required, because of the divisions, massive divisions that existed in American society, an explicit affirmation of racial equality in the church or the body of Christ.

From the first meeting of the Department of Race Relations of 1923, Haynes called for multiplied opportunities such as conferences, meetings, and committees for personal contacts of “white and colored men and women with the hope of bringing confidence in each

other.” This emphasis on developing trust between the races reflected a strong belief in the power and efficacy of interracial contact and personal relations.

Given the number of Americans who went to church compared to their... or other organizations. And Haynes believed in Christianity as a divine source for personal and social change. He argued that it was within the walls and cloisters of the churches that the ideal of brotherhood may be fostered in those who will go forth to challenge the practices, to preach the ideals of the future divine events, and to teach true science and new techniques to misguided America. The Christian religion carries the great dynamic for this social change. Here I'm ending an extended quote from Haynes.

What gave Haynes confidence that Christianity could eliminate the barriers between the races in view of the dominant theology of segregation in the South and the reality of de facto segregation in most churches in the North? A simple answer is that he was convinced that there was a power and hope inherent in the Christian message. Haynes maintained this optimistic view of personal and social transformation through Christian practices throughout his public career, and I've not found any evidence in his public or private writings to indicate that he doubted this rather sanguine view.

Personal biography and educational experience help us explain the particular form that Haynes' arguments took. Well, there's always an element of personal biography that remains elusive to the historian, and I'd be definitely open to having a further discussion about this in our question session.

Haynes was the central figure in the development of the theological underpinnings, the actual work of the FCC's Department of Race Relations. Historian David Wells notes that Haynes and Benjamin Mays were two of the most influential African Americans within the inner circles of the Protestant establishment before the emergence of Martin Luther King, Jr. on the national scene in the 1950s.

Haynes was the first African American to hold an executive position in the FCC when he became the Executive Secretary of the Department of Race Relations in 1934. Haynes and Mays were present at the special meeting of the FCC in Columbus, Ohio, in 1946 when its historic endorsement of desegregation was announced. When Haynes stepped down from this position in 1947, he could look with some degree of gratification at a host of innovative projects that he had instituted in the FCC to address racial division in the churches and in the nation.

Haynes was born in 1880 and grew up in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. His mother was a domestic worker, and his father a day laborer. After graduating at the top of his class from Fisk University in 1903, Haynes went to Yale University, studying sociology with William Graham Sumner until 1904. The following academic year, he studied at Yale Divinity School, but had

to leave after his mother's home burned to the ground around the same time that his sister entered Fisk Preparatory School.

It also seems that there was a personal, or perhaps you might say personal/official reason that he left Yale Divinity School. We know from his correspondence with W.E.B. Du Bois that Du Bois suggested to him that a... that his work in the YMCA might make for more expansive work than work as a Congregational minister. Because it seemed that Haynes was at least thinking about the potential of becoming a minister.

So after spending two summers, 1906 and 1907 as a student at the University of Chicago, then doing graduate work at the New York School of Philanthropy in 1909 to 1910, Haynes found time to enroll at Columbia University, where he received a doctorate in sociology and social administration in 1912, the first African American to do so

As a man of enormous energy, Haynes was employed at a variety of different jobs, working as the Secretary of the Colored Man's Department of the International Committee of the YMCA from 1905 to 1908. And from 1910 to 1920, he was also a professor of sociology and economics at Fisk University. He helped form the National Urban League in 1910, and for a short while was its Executive Director. From 1918 to 1921, he served as the Director of Negro Economics at the United States Department of Labor, and in 1922, he joined the FCC's newly formed Commission on Negro Churches and Race Relations. Pardon me for all the dates.

Haynes' book, *The Trend of the Racist*, which was published in 1922, served as a blueprint for his work at the FCC's Department of Race Relations. The book set forth his diagnosis of the problem of race in the United States. As blacks and whites were becoming increasingly segregated in separate neighborhoods, churches, social networks, Haynes urged the need for cooperative endeavors that would bring the races together to achieve common goals and share common projects.

He felt that there was "almost unlimited opportunity for promoting racial cooperation" through various organizations. Haynes saw schools and educational institutions, churches, the home and family life, government, and volunteer organizations such as labor organizations as avenues through which positive contacts may be made that might create new attitudes and ways, and that give the spirit of brotherhood the opportunity to operate within and among the races.

He was emphatic that in his desire to see blacks and whites come together through these various ways, whites would have to realize that they were not simply working for blacks, but with them as partners for social, political, cultural, and economic progress. Each race's destiny was bound up with the other's welfare.

To supplement these various arenas to bring about positive contacts between the races, Haynes proposed popular educational activity, which he termed "propaganda." Newspaper

and different organizations would be enlisted to stress “racial likenesses,” instances of good deeds, and more positive reports of each race. He was certain that whites needed more instruction than Blacks, given that “negroes know the life among white people better than the latter know the inner side of life among negro people.”

The press, the pulpit, the lecture platform would call the moving picture. And conferences and conventions would therefore be crucial as avenues of educational propaganda in altering negative views and stereotypes, particularly those regarding African Americans. One example that Haynes was careful to stress was the white press, which played such a crucial, sometimes deadly role in inciting white mobs to violence and lynching. Timely news and fair-minded editorials, he noted, could save lives and prevent violent racial clashes.

To return to Haynes’ project, Race Relations Sundays were built around the ideas that relationships were the crucial foci around which new developments in interracial contact could emerge. Haynes did not have much use for offering at length an alternative to the dominant theories of racial superiority, though he did seek to refute them in most of his published works that addressed the topic directly.

This... the reason for this was that he firmly believed that racial prejudices, frictions, fears, suspicions, and antagonism, as he put it, cannot be attacked in the abstract and in general. Concrete relations and what he called “pleasant experiences” during the regular go of things, everyday life, must take place as an alternative to what was currently existing. Only such positive contacts and experiences could uproot hostile feelings, prejudice, beliefs, and attitudes, and unfounded fears, and groundless suspicions.

The plan was to bring Blacks and whites together in a non-threatening environment and a space where they could show mutual respect and appreciation for each other. Haynes believed that small steps of this kind were necessary to address suspicion, anger, and fear among African Americans and whites. And that through the multiplication and growth of these kinds of events, race relations would become more harmonious.

Now, there's a lot more I could say about Haynes, but I just want to leave you with three summary assessments of Haynes.

First, Haynes’ work in Black organizations and colleges, his situatedness in interracial movements, and his personal and research contacts with Black migrants and farmers of the South are examples of what historian Robert Orsi calls the practice of theologizing indeterminate circumstances. There was no singular setting in which Haynes formulated his theology of race relations. And he kept reforming and revising bits and pieces of it as he lectured at churches, before interracial conferences, FCC administrative gatherings, and in the various organizations of which he was a part.

Haynes was drawing upon some of the individuals who influenced his ideas. His work in disparate areas and his cobbling together of ideas and practices to uproot the hydra-headed monster of racism are examples of this ongoing need to improvise and find religious and other sources wherever they could be found to address the existential crisis of lynching and violence against Black lives in the early 20th century.

Second, as a Black man who was a Congregationalist working with an ecumenical religious organization like the FCC, and who yet maintained regular contact with and worked with Black colleges alongside people like W.E.B. Du Bois and Benjamin Mays, Haynes does not easily fit into categories like Black religion for Black church. Even so, Haynes deserves as much entry into that amorphous and evolving area of Black religion as Mays or others given his situatedness, the sources of his thought, and his lyric experience in Black networks.

His work in the FCC did not end his connection with Black churches, and even at the formal level of work inside the FCC, Haynes' contemporaries struggled with his constant and insistent requests to aid Black churches by building up the cultural lives of African Americans. One representative of the Northern Baptist Convention pointedly asked Haynes, to what extent is that work considered religious?

That is to say, the work that he was proposing to do among Black farmers and Black... and in Black economic situations. Although we don't have Haynes' direct response to this query, the sense is that he was not interested in these boundaries given circumstances of Black life and the necessity and pressing nature of the work in which he was engaged.

My third and final point is that Haynes is not among those intellectuals that historian Dennis Dickerson mentions who prepared the way for King and their positions in Black educational institutions, their studies of Black churches and Black religion, and in their discovery of the work of Mahatma Gandhi. These were people who also learned from A. Philip Randolph, who theologized direct action techniques and developed the practices for a religiously-based assault against segregation.

While I'm not aware of Haynes having traveled to India, certainly there's no evidence of Haynes discussing direct action techniques. Yet Haynes certainly may be said to have participated in what Dickerson calls the theological foundations for the civil rights movement in emphasizing Black intellectuals of the 1930s and 1940s who asserted the sacredness of the human personality, who attacked segregation as sin, and who advocated nonviolent strategies against Jim Crow. Dickerson could easily have included Haynes in this lineage. Haynes, too, preached that segregation was sin and was a leading proponent of the FCC's push against segregation in a special meeting in Columbus, Ohio in 1946.

His own experience as a leader in an ecumenical and interracial department demonstrated the statement that segregation was antithetical to true Christian fellowship and unity in the body of Christ. He longed to apply what he and others call the transformative power of early

Christianity to their contemporary context. And it was this immoral... it was this moral and emotional power that he spent his career studying and trying to harness and invoke to produce non-segregated churches and an integrated society.

So that's all I have to say about Haynes. I want to just say something briefly here about the FCC. I became interested in the FCC in part because of my interest in liberal and ecumenical Protestantism from about 1900 to 1950. Part of this came about because of my longstanding interest in what's sometimes referred to as the social gospel movement, when it emerged in the 1880s, was concerned about the industrialization of American society and the problems of everyday workers and laborers, giving laborers a fair share, and the concern about the rise of corporations and their outsized influence in American society. And there's a vast literature on that, and I became interested in what this form of Christianity did about the problem of race.

Most historians, for example, acknowledge that before the Great Migration of African Americans moving to places like Chicago, and Harlem, and so on from 1915 and thereafter. It's pretty clear that prior to that, many of these ecumenical Protestants saw the problem of race principally as a Southern phenomenon, as a Southern problem. And so I wanted to understand the degree to which the Great Migration spurred or prompted northern Protestants to become more keenly aware of the problem of racial oppression in American society and the concrete ways in which they did something about it.

And so with the formation of the Department of Race Relations, as it was called in 1922 and 1923, the Commission on Race Relations, I wanted to trace this movement from its formation to... from 1922 to 1950, when the National Council of Churches incorporated the Federal Council of Churches and took on a number of other organizations under its umbrella.

And one of the reasons I end in 1950 is that there is a scholar, James Finley, who I think has done an excellent job of looking at the National Council of Churches and how it addressed the problem of race from 1950 to about 1972. And so I was doing, as it were, a prequel. And partly because this scholar and a number of others had dismissed the work of the Federal Council of Churches,

I wanted to understand how the Federal Council of Churches developed its own project to address the problem of race, and specifically the role that George Edmund Haynes played because when he became the Executive Director, or the Executive Secretary of the Department of Race Relations, he was one of the principal figures involved in their anti-lynching campaign, their Race Relations Sunday, and their interracial workshops that emerged in 1943, partly as a result of racial friction and for that matter, race riots that emerged in Detroit and various other cities because African Americans moving to those areas, working in the automotive, and defense industries, and so on.

So in some ways, I also became interested in what we might call a broader question, which is what are some of the factors that help explain the social and cultural prominence of a certain form of American Christianity at a given moment?

Much of our public conversation today is about the Christian Right. We think about the emergence of the evangelicals, the so-called neo-evangelical movement in 1943, the National Association of Evangelicals began doing cooperative work. In fact, one of their points of reference is the Federal Council of Churches. You cannot have dual membership in the National Association of Evangelicals and the Federal Council of Churches. Furthermore, they are criticizing the Federal Council of Churches' position on race, economic issues, and so on. And so I wanted to understand what partly explained why the Federal Council of Churches was prominent and how that... how it utilized, as it were, its cultural prestige to address the problem of race.

And there are other things that flow from that. But that's sort of like, in a nutshell, what drove me, as it were, to the project and some of the kinds of questions that I wanted to answer. I have a lot more to say, but I'm going to pause because I'm looking forward to your questions and looking forward to the conversation.

KYLE: That was great. Thank you so much, Curtis, for getting us going. So please use the Q&A feature to ask any and all questions that you have.

I'd love to, you know, maybe pick up a little where you were talking about what you do with sort of historical biography and maybe talk a little bit about so, you know, Haynes, you put Haynes at the center of your presentation today because I asked you to partially, but also because he's really at the center of the story that you're uncovering. And he's so accomplished and so complex.

I wonder if you could just maybe talk a little bit about the sources that you have to kind of recover him. Did he actually write an autobiography at any point? Or are you, are you really just kind of pulling from his public papers?

CURTIS: Yeah. That's an excellent question.

So for the project, I have been drawing mostly on his public papers, some of his letters. Some of his work is scattered here and there. Like Fisk has some material, Yale has some material. But the bulk of the material that I use, especially as is relevant to the FCC, is in Philadelphia at the Presbyterian Historical Society.

My understanding, and I haven't been able to come across this, but... that he and perhaps his wife Elizabeth had begun work on something that was somewhat like an autobiography.

Two scholars who wrote dissertations on him, one in 1972, the other one 75, one at Columbia, and I forget the other, where the other one was, they make mention of this. I haven't been able to find this. I've been... I want to contact Fisk to find out more about this.

So... and also the other thing I want to, point I want to make is even when I'm looking at some of the personal correspondence, Haynes is not the most introspective, self-reflective figure, meaning that reflecting on his own thoughts and so on. And so that's what makes it much harder. Sometimes you get a sense of it when you look at some of the material, the letters, for example, that Du Bois is writing him, giving him advice and so on. And so I don't have as much access to some of the material.

I actually had an interesting conversation, however, with Bruce Haynes, his grandson, who is a sociologist. And in fact, I don't know if you can actually see this. Bruce Haynes has actually written a book that's somewhat personal biography, but also talks a bit about his grandfather. That was actually quite helpful, but not as helpful in terms of what... the kind of stuff that I'm interested in.

For example, the, what we know about the degree to which Haynes was serious about considering becoming a Congregational minister. I would like to know a bit more about his involvement in the Congregational church as a whole.

And to be honest with you, I wasn't as interested... It's only after the book has come out and people have been asking me very pointed questions about Haynes that I was like, maybe I need to look into this a bit more because I want... as the book itself was evolving, Haynes became more prominent because I discovered that he was the brainchild of the Race Relations Sundays and various other projects.

Another thing I wanted to say is not something about Haynes, but the process of how this book evolved. Some things. I mean, I had general ideas as the book began. I never imagined, for example, that I was gonna devote an entire chapter to the Federal Council of Churches anti-lynching campaign. But as I began doing research, I was surprised to discover there were just boxes of material. I was aware of the NAACP. I had written briefly about the problem of lynching in American society in my first book, and I felt like I had read as much as I could read about lynching and didn't really want to address that topic again. Certainly wasn't thinking about it.

But I couldn't write about the Federal Council of Churches because I discovered the important role that George Haynes had alongside with a woman, a white woman named Catherine Gardner, who was a Presbyterian. They were the key figures involved in the anti-lynching campaign. And so, some things only became evident, as it were, in hindsight. And I thought about this maybe a separate article perhaps should be written on George Haynes, and I want to explore further some of the material in, at Yale and at Fisk because it has more correspondence.

But there are just some things I didn't notice, and didn't pay as much attention to because I was, I didn't see myself as doing, as it were, a biography of George Haynes. Even though, as I said rightly so, people are intensely curious about his life.

KYLE: Yeah. And I think there's that way in which, as a scholar, you're trying to think about the wellsprings of ideas, right, that are informing his theology and understanding. I mean, it's such a dramatic childhood, right, compared to where he, you know, where he kind of ends up in establishment.

And thinking about... I really love how you talk about kind of his situatedness, right? And that we have to take into account the influence that that is gonna have. But he's, he strikes me as a very complicated human being, at the same time.

We've got great questions coming in. Let's... let me jump over to them. The, this is from Elizabeth Hambrick-Stowe. She writes, the FCC's theology of brotherhood was rooted in the social gospel theology of the late 19th, early 20th century, perhaps especially Rauschenbusch's vision of the kingdom of God as a cooperative commonwealth.

Rauschenbusch, oddly, never addressed race as a social or theological issue. But his theology provided a paradigm for those who did. To what extent might Hayes have been influenced by Rauschenbusch, versus influences arising from the Black church or from social experience and Black intellectuals like Du Bois? You know, again, kind of go into where we were just talking. Further, how much does his optimism jive with the countervailing perspective of the neo-orthodoxy?

All right. So there's a lot of questions in there.

CURTIS: Yeah. Yeah. So the question about, sort of about Walter Rauschenbusch... this is the one where it's more difficult for tracing sort of the ideological roots of Haynes' thought compared to someone like Benjamin Mays.

We know, for example, Benjamin Mays studied at the University of Chicago. Shailer Mathews, who was a key figure in the social gospel movement, had a significant influence, I would argue, on someone like Benjamin Mays. We also know that Benjamin Mays did, like, an edited volume on the social gospel of... the thought of Walter Rauschenbusch and a number of other figures.

I don't see any direct references to Walter Rauschenbusch. But I do make the argument that the FCC's theology of brotherhood is very much rooted in the social gospel tradition. In fact, the argument about the fatherhood of God in the brotherhood of man... I have a section where I try to trace that, the centrality of that way of thinking about social solidarity, the cooperative commonwealth and so on, and the way in which that idea is developed,

particularly among a number of social gospel leaders in the late 19th and early 20th century, and the way in which this is very prominent, and the Federal Council of Churches.

But yet, as I said prior to, a number of African-American figures and Black churches in particular urging, in addition to white Southern representatives, the FCC to form a commission to address the problem of race. I don't find any evidence.

I mean, the FCC is formed in 1908, so it's almost a decade and a half before it forms a specific commission to address the problem of race. And even though I want to argue that certain concepts such as social solidarity, the equality of all human beings, and so on, on an ideological level, one could argue that they pose a challenge to this dominant theology of segregation that exists in the South, that it's much more capacious form of theology that lends itself to this argument about brotherhood, and so on.

But they are concrete social circumstances that take place, which I tried on the one hand, to pay attention to what we might call the evolution of theology, but also sort of social and political factors that come together, as it were. As I said, I just don't see it, at least in terms of someone like George Edmund Haynes, directly engaging Walter Rauschenbusch. In a curious way, he's a very eclectic figure.

Even some individuals, surprisingly, who were very conservative in their thought, William Sumner, William Graham Sumner, for example, at Yale. His particular theory about the development of social mores, and specifically his emphasis on concrete customs that are changed over time.

This seems to exert enormous influence on Haynes in several ways. One is Haynes' tendency to be suspicious of intellectual arguments having any sufficient efficacy to undermine or uproot sentimented practices, to use his terminology. And that relations, customs, and so on, are much more important, the way that you address them in everyday situations rather than theorizing, as it were. That seems to mean the very terminology he uses is indebted to Sumner's massive book *Folkways* that was published, I think 1907, or thereabout.

So there are a number of individual thinkers that Haynes is indebted to, even though he's certainly rooted in the Christian tradition, trying to wed, as it were, certain elements of sociological thought with a kind of democratic emphasis on Christian equality and so on. Even though, as I said, I've certainly emphasized the social gospel movement more generally and Walter Rauschenbusch, it's hard to say, to make an argument about a direct influence of Walter Rauschenbusch on someone like George Edmund Haynes.

What would... what was the second part of the question?

KYLE: How does, so how does Haynes' optimism for, kind of, relationship-based change jive with the countervailing perspective of the neo-orthodoxy?

CURTIS: Yeah, and sort of Christian realism of Reinhold Niebuhr and a number of others. I would... I guess I would address it in several ways.

One is Haynes is representative of precisely the form of liberal Protestantism that Reinhold Niebuhr and others turned their theological artillery against, in terms of whether it's the emphasis on goodwill, the emphasis on positive relationships, and so on. You see almost nothing about a key term in Reinhold Niebuhr's thought in these figures... coercion.

KYLE: Hmm.

CURTIS: And furthermore, even with regard to the question about like economic boycotts and so on, that release hastening a moral man, in a moral society. I suppose just sort of tracing them side by side, they evolve uneasily alongside one another.

What I have actually found is that a number of leaders in the FCC who are sympathetic to Haynes try to acknowledge some of Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism and at least try to argue that somehow they need to amend, as it were, their more optimistic views about human nature and also prepare themselves for how extraordinarily difficult and the amount of sacrifice that's going to be required to truly address the problem of racial oppression in American society.

Even so, and this just seems doubly curious, given the fact that this is an African-American figure, I don't see an awareness of this particular theological tradition, Christian Realism, in someone like George Edmund Haynes.

So I... maybe this is something that I should reflect on in terms of trying to think about how to bring them into conversation. But it is a curious thing in the sense that you have this rather sanguine view, and in the 1930s and 40s existing, as it were, alongside someone like Reinhold Niebuhr's view.

One more point I want to make on this. Perhaps it's the day-to-day concrete work that they're engaging in. They're not shying away from the brutality of lynching and the darker side of racial oppression in American society. So that, whatever Haynes' optimism might be, you see them having to address in concrete forms the most brutal aspects of racism in American society.

So this is happening alongside... maybe one could argue that this is some aspect of the Christian tradition that lends itself to Haynes' optimism, even while he's engaged in this very, very difficult work.

KYLE: That's great. Thank you so much for those reflections.

I have another question here from Susanne Veal, who said, thank you so much for your book. It's absolutely fascinating.

Could you elaborate on the anti-lynching movement? And so that's, I think, your second chapter. And I think a lot of people are gonna be surprised. They might be more familiar with the NAACP story. You're really offering a different story.

CURTIS: So, let me say something because I don't want to make any assumptions here. Before the FCC comes on the scene, I would say that there are two key moments in the anti-lynching scene.

When it's at its height in terms of total number of lynchings in the 1880s and 1890s. Ida B. Wells is one of the most prominent and significant figures. And then, of course, the NAACP, which forms in the early 20th century and takes on anti-lynching as one of its key tasks. The anti-lynching campaign with regard to the FCC forms with the emergence of the department.

Originally it spoke of itself as basically wanting to exist for about ten years as an educational campaign to educate the public about the sheer numbers of lynchings in the United States, the brutality, and furthermore, putting out the fact that the Southerners who are claiming that African Americans are sexually assaulting women, that this is false, that the white newspapers are inciting mobs, and so on. So it's changing public opinion for the most part.

What happens, however, is that when Haynes becomes more deeply involved, a couple of things occur. One is, because of Haynes' emphasis on practices and so on, he begins trying to think about how to incorporate discussions about lynching and this, the underlying racial misperceptions that go alongside it with, how do we, how do we change attitudes?

So he began, one, working with people who are doing work in all kinds of other settings: Rachel DuBois, for example, looking at the ideational roots of racism in public schools in Philadelphia, for example; the Race Relations Sunday, which is, with its emphasis on liturgy; the... so-called honor roll, which is highlighting the states that do not have a lynching in a given year. And then by 1934, they institute what's actually happening in some of the other major anti-lynching organizations, which is detailed studies of the social, economic, and conditions that give rise to lynching as a way of publicizing it, but also calling out what's happening in these local communities.

They began supporting, for example, the federal anti-lynching bill that's proposed in Congress in 1931 and then 1934. Not successful, in part, because of a filibuster on the part of Southerners. They're actually working alongside the NAACP at one point. In fact, Katherine Gardner is known on a first name basis by Walter White, the Executive Director of the NAACP. At one point, he's asking her for... to assist financially. And... he must not have known about the inner-dynamics of the FCC because they were barely surviving in terms of their

funding and so on. And so the FCC is engaged in this campaign and is rudely awakened and disappointed, of course, when the federal anti-lynching bill is actually not passed.

But during the Truman administration, when it actually publishes a report about, among other things, the problem of lynching in American society and calling it out, and also making an argument that it's a blot on the nation's character, particularly with regard to the nascent Cold War. It is utilized as one tool, among others, as a way of trying to shame the nation.

I would argue that for the most part, certainly prior to 1934, it was principally an educational campaign. Now, to some extent, the NAACP and a number of others were really wrestling with the problem of how do we change public opinion? Should we publicize, for example, these gruesome postcards and images that are showing the bodies of African Americans that have been burned alive and so on? And to some extent, the FCC and others are wrestling with the question about where... at what point does the public, publicizing of the brutalities of lynching become a way of demeaning Black bodies, for example?

But for the most part, it's an educational campaign that's intended to shame the nation, to change, sway public opinion, and to bring the cultural prestige of a religious organization. And as I said, the disappointments are all around. FDR, for example, is tepid in his support because he, because he wants the support of Southern senators for the New Deal. And Southern senators obviously are opposed to it.

And so that, on the political and legal front, not much success is had. But nonetheless, the campaign really lasts for about two decades or so. And it's one organization alongside the NAACP and various others, I think, that needs to be highlighted in terms of its active work in the anti-lynching campaign.

KYLE: Great. Thank you.

So, Rick Taylor, asks a question here. So you kind of referenced James Finley's work on the National Council of Churches. And Rick asks, you know, in 1963, the NCC set up a Commission on Religion and Race. And it is often thought of as the first activist, demonstrative action in NCC's life. How did that agency under the National Council really compare to the agency that Haynes led under the Federal Council? Is there a, is there a line or a break?

CURTIS: Yeah. That's... 1963, by the way, is an important date because a number of African-American activists and others began expressing a certain degree of cynicism and impatience with the integrationist impulse of the Civil Rights Movement.

That's not the only organization that formed. In fact, I've been doing research at the Chicago History Museum because the National Conference on Race and Religion formed. And out of

that, the Chicago Conference on Race and Religion in 1963, which existed for about ten years or more. And I've been looking at some of their files.

A couple of things I want to say about that and the... and the National Council of Churches.

First of all, I don't think sufficient attention has been paid to how the theological concept of brotherhood was not only prominent in the FCC and in continuity with that, the NCC. King, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and a number of others were sponsored by or involved in conferences with the National Council of Churches. In fact, King and Benjamin Mays were present at the Chicago Conference on Race and Religion in its inauguration in January of 1963. I think that the theology of brotherhood continued.

The most significant conflict that emerged was the NCC, in addition to the NAACP and various other organizations, were being criticized as gradualist, bourgeois organizations that did not adequately grasp the depth of racism in American society, so that on the grassroots level, economic boycotts, putting bodies in the streets, and so on, is pitted against these gradualist organizations that do not sufficiently grasp the problem of racism in American society.

And furthermore, a kind of disillusionment, even with Martin Luther King Jr. I would argue, with the Kennedy administration for being too cautious. And so, I would, I would argue that on the theological front, there's a great deal of continuity. But there's a great deal of pushback that these organizations become much more on the side of African Americans.

And so the NCC publicly puts its weight behind the Civil Rights Act in 1965. And even though it's still being criticized, the... I would argue that there's a certain degree of continuity in terms of the theological underpinnings of its arguments about race, even though in some respects it and various national organizations, civil rights organizations began to experience a great deal of criticism in addition to the criticism that they're receiving from the left.

By the late 1960s, the NCC is persona non grata in the White House, especially when Nixon becomes president, partly because of its criticism of the Vietnam War. And Billy Graham and the, and the National Association of Evangelicals are now, as it were, in a rather chummy relationship with the then president in 1969.

KYLE: Thank you.

Question from Nick Pruitt, who says, thanks for such an important and thorough project. In your research, did you encounter much in the way of local responses to Race Relations Sundays? Was there any resistance at the ground level among mainline churches to the positions of the FCC on race and civil rights?

CURTIS: Most of the resistance that I have found has been, and won't be surprising, it's in the South. But there is also some resistance in the Midwest, specifically with regard to the anti-lynching campaign. And I can speak about this specifically.

When the FCC began hiring individuals to engage in these intensive studies, one of the criticisms, especially when the reports come out, is that local people are, goodhearted local people are being demonized. And that the FCC is an elite, out of touch organization that does not understand the practice of Christianity in these local contexts. And I detail that in one specific instance. I think in that instance, it's in the state of Maryland.

But, that's a difficult, it's a more difficult question to answer with respect to how much resistance there is on the part of mainline churches. What I've been able to find, and this is where Finley is actually more useful in terms of what's happening in the Midwest in particular, where local churches began resisting the activist role of pastors.

Sometimes it's an argument that pastors are exceeding their role in the sense that they are no longer preaching the Christian gospel from the perspective of laypeople. In other instances, it is a claim that they're politicizing the church. I mean, in some ways, I would, I want to argue that the FCC's racial work is a significant factor in what sociologists and others wrote about in the late sixties and seventies, about the clergy and laity divide.

That, in the Presbyterian Church in particular, a wealthy industrialist, an oil magnate J. Howard Pew, forms a group of lay Presbyterians, this is the Presbyterian USA, to make it clear that they are adamantly opposed to the work that the, that the National Council of Churches is doing: its stance on race, its stance on economic matters, and so on.

And in fact, I would argue that some of these individuals, they didn't simply form groups within the NCC. They broke away, and some of them became members of the... the National Association of Evangelicals. Although I haven't traced this at length, I suspect on the congregational level, some of them probably left the mainline churches precisely over these specific issues.

I, would for some... maybe I need to pursue this further. But those who want to pursue this further, there's a scholar by the name of Mark Newman from England who has written some really good work on the, the National Council of Churches, the work that they did in the Mississippi Delta in the 1960s. Carolyn Dupont and a number of others look at the division between mainline churches in the South and mainline churches in the North over the civil rights movement in the state of Mississippi in particular. I mean, to be completely frank, I just haven't looked in depth at what's happening on local levels because I was trying to tell the story of this elite organization more so than what's happening on the local level. There are good studies of that, but trying to link the two is a more difficult one.

KYLE: I think there's... what I love about what you do in this work is that you're very, you're very forthcoming about the critiques that scholars have offered up until this period. And I think you've done a really good job of, you know, pushing back and sort of saying like, let's understand this in the context of the time when it was happening.

Where do you kind of... what do you take away from these ideas of the theology of brotherhood and these... and maybe their kind of mechanisms for trying to create change? Are there... and I know this is, you're the scholar, not the 21st century activist, but maybe if you... I'm sure you probably have a little bit of activist in you, you know, are there lessons, I guess, that you would see for today that come out that maybe have been obscured because what came next was maybe so different?

CURTIS: A couple of things.

One is for organizations, or organizations that have a segment of themselves engaged in race work, it seems that there's a relationship with that work and their critique of the United States as a Christian nation in particular. You see that explicitly in terms of the anti-lynching campaign. And there are other scholars alongside myself who've made an argument that it was also a factor in terms of this, the growing split between mainline and conservative evangelical Protestants, particularly when they took an activist stance on race and more generally, the degree to which evangelicals sort of valorized the American nation.

Now, I want to make qualified argument here, because not all mainliners took this view. After all, the Department of Race Relations was one department among others. So it doesn't represent the entirety of the FCC. But nonetheless, the incorporation of African Americans and women in particular in this department was at least an incremental step towards the church's being more inclusive in terms of African Americans and women occupying positions of leadership.

Now, as a whole, the FCC was certainly not progressive with regard to women occupying roles or positions of leadership. But I think this had a long-term effect in terms of the stance that mainline churches would take on a range of issues, and also widened the gap between mainline or ecumenical Protestants, and National Association of Evangelical types, and more generally, evangelicals on the local level. And I think that that is a significant factor in addition to the split between clergy and laity in terms of the stances that a number of clergy were actually taking.

Then the following point I want to make is that, while a number of scholars and others were sort of criticizing evangelicals for failing to take a stance on civil rights and so on, what they really were criticizing is a particular stance. Because once evangelicals became active, they took stances. But it just happened to be the stance that was almost opposite of the mainline. And so it wasn't sort of, as it were, a lack of activism per say, but the particular kind of activism that they engaged in. And some of them in fact pointed to King and certain activist mainline

ministers as legitimizing the kind of work that they were doing, such as Jerry Falwell and a number of others.

KYLE: Well, thank you so much. We are at the top of the hour. I want to do two things before I let you go.

One is I want to encourage people to come to the Congregational Library where you can see the work of Haynes. And this is, you know, his 1922, "The Trend of the Races." And what I love is that this copy was given by Olive Jeter Haynes. And, so, you know, coming from within the family, gifted to the institution. We also have other of his imprints. To do that, you have to come all the way to Boston.

In your own living room, you can read this fantastic book, *A Theology of Brotherhood*, and let me thank you, Curtis, so much for giving us an hour of your time today and sharing your wisdom with us. Thank you.

CURTIS: Thank you.