BENEATH THE SURFACE:

UNCOVERING THE CONSTITUTIVE WORK PERFORMED BY METAPHORIC CLUSTERS WITHIN THE RACE RHETORIC OF EVANGELICAL MEGACHURCHES

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation contributes to scholarly conversations about race rhetoric, metaphor, and evangelical rhetoric by uncovering the racially-significant constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors within the race rhetoric of evangelical megachurches. Engaging in metaphoric cluster criticism from a constitutive perspective, I analyze sermon series delivered at three evangelical megachurches in the Twin Cities in the wake of George Floyd's murder to investigate the crucial role that metaphors play within theological rhetoric. Though these churches profess similar theological commitments to one another, clusters of metaphors mediate those commitments into divergent constitutive guidance regarding how to respond to social issues like race. I propose that space and mobility metaphors play an important role within that mediation by shaping the means and urgency with which religious auditors are invited to respond to a social crisis. Evangelical megachurch sermons merit ongoing attention from rhetorical scholars and scholars of evangelicalism because they contain clusters of metaphors that perform constitutive work that influences how congregations relate to other communities within the context of urgent social justice issues like race.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Racial Crisis in the Twin Cities

Just a few months into grappling with the deadly COVID-19 pandemic, the United States was gripped again on May 25, 2020, by a viral video showing George Floyd, a forty-six year-old Black resident of Minneapolis who had allegedly passed a counterfeit bill at a local shop, being pinned to the ground by three police officers. Officer Derek Chauvin knelt on Floyd's neck for over eight minutes while bystanders, including an off-duty firefighter attempting to provide medical assistance, pleaded for him to stop.[1] After crying "I can't breathe" and begging for his life under Chauvin's knee, Floyd died of what was later ruled heart and lung failure.[2] Police brutality against Black Americans is a longstanding issue, but the flagrant nature of this killing defied conventional explanations. Viral online circulation of footage of the death renewed national outrage regarding use of deadly force against Black Americans and sparked protests, violence, controversy, and a surge of racial justice rhetoric. This led to a civic crisis across the nation, and especially in the Twin Cities.

Floyd's tragic death and the unrest that followed left residents from all corners of the Twin Cities looking for messages that could help them make sense of the horrific killing and its social reverberations. In particular, people looked to their community leaders for guidance. Among them, religious leaders and ministers of various denominations, including evangelical megachurch pastors, became a significant source of messages attempting to fill that role.[3] With attendance numbers in the thousands, evangelical megachurch pastors address the largest congregations in the Twin Cities. Pastoral rhetoric is constitutive, not determinative. It does not dictate the religious or social beliefs of auditors but rather addresses congregants with guidance

regarding who to become and how to interpret the world around them.[4] Evangelical pastoral rhetoric also involves a special form of authority that places unique constraints on rhetors. The doctrine of biblical inerrancy, which asserts that the Bible is fully accurate in every detail, affords evangelical pastors the ability to speak with the authority of ultimate truth as long as congregants judge that their pastor's statements align with the message of the Bible.[5] By the same token, pastors whose congregants perceive their statements as conflicting with the divine message of scripture face the possibilities of censure and backlash. True to the movement's name, evangelical megachurch sermons also address audiences outside of their congregations, constructing them sometimes as seekers on a journey towards the Christian faith and other times as "lost souls" who oppose it.[6]

Intriguingly, many of the rhetorical messages produced by clergy at evangelical megachurches in the Twin Cities deployed numerous metaphors, including a notable variety of space and mobility metaphors, in the process of offering congregants perspective on Floyd's death and ensuing social unrest in the summer of 2020. For example, Peter Haas, a White pastor who leads Minneapolis's Substance Church, preaches a June 10 sermon based upon the Old Testament book of Joshua in which he presents the miraculous, God-given strategy that the Israelite army used to bring down the walls of Jericho and conquer the city as a metaphor for how congregants should respond to their circumstances:

> The solution that we need most is not a political one. It's not an earthly one. And don't get me wrong. Do we need to be doing things, you know, just to be helpful? Of course, we do. We do. We need to take a stand for righteousness. We need to do all these types of things. But you know what? We don't trust in those things. We trust in God, because at the end of the day, God's got the strategy, and that strategy is not going to be intuitive. If they would've tried to attack Jericho the

> way they would've known how to do it, it would've been a mess. But they instead had to do this really, really, really, really bizarre approach to Jericho. You know, walk around it, do this weird thing, okay? God's strategy to solve our problems is just fundamentally always going to be different than what people will recommend everywhere. And I really believe that the only way our city is ever going to have hope and healing is if people like you and I get on our knees, listen to the commander of the Lord of Hosts, and allow him to birth in us the type of strategy that will truly bring about the hope and the transformation that this region needs most.[7]

Haas's use of a biblical narrative of invasion and conquest to characterize the crisis in the Twin Cities and his emphasis on responding to the crisis ways that are "unintuitive" may seem like strikingly ill-fitting responses to an unfolding civic crisis sparked by a violent act of police brutality. It raises questions about why a spiritual leader would use these images of conquest and submission as a metaphor for how congregants should approach a racial crisis. To answer those questions, this dissertation examines how this and numerous other metaphors based upon biblical texts cohere into larger patterns of meaning within the race rhetoric of evangelical megachurch pastors.

I am interested in understanding how the deployment of clusters of metaphors within theological rhetoric influences the subjectivities that rhetors invite auditors to adopt in relation to social issues such as racial justice. To that end, my dissertation consists of three case studies that investigate the clusters of metaphors that evangelical megachurch pastors in the Twin Cities deployed in their sermons about George Floyd. Approaching metaphoric cluster criticism from a constitutive perspective, I analyze how those metaphors construct and invite auditors to inhabit subjectivities that have implications for race relations. I ground that analysis within the troubling historical and cultural context surrounding evangelical race rhetoric.

Studies of evangelical theological discourse from across the religious movement's history indicate that evangelicals have often used theological argumentation to supply rationalizations for an unjust racial status quo in American society. In contrast to Social Gospel rhetoric that calls Christians in America to actively reform society to be more just, evangelical social issue rhetoric typically emphasizes personal salvation and individual morality along with trust in God's plan for society over calls to actively engage in efforts to reform society. The weeks following Floyd's death saw a dramatic increase in race rhetoric from the pulpits of evangelical megachurches both nationally and within the Twin Cities, so a study of evangelical megachurch sermons from this period provides an opportunity to examine whether that rhetoric invited auditors to accept or to challenge a societal status quo characterized by racial injustice. I also discuss the implications of evangelical metaphor use for the relationships between predominantly White evangelical megachurches and the racially diverse communities in which their church campuses are located. What stands out prominently in these sermons is the variety of space and mobility metaphors, including many based upon biblical texts, present within them.

Biblically-derived spatial metaphors including cosmic battlefields, blood-stained ground, spiritual kingdoms, ancient roadways, and more abounded in the sermons of evangelical megachurch pastors as they offered direction to their audiences about how to respond to the racial crisis that ensued after George Floyd's death, as did metaphors of mobility and immobility pertaining to running, carrying weight, invading enemy territory, being held captive, and more. Peter Haas concluded the aforementioned series of sermons about the Israelite conquest of Jericho by describing the church's outreach efforts during the George Floyd protests as an "invasion" of downtown Minneapolis.[8] Dave Zuleger, a pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church in downtown Minneapolis, used the biblical metaphor of "running the race" towards heaven and

instructed "minority" congregants "lay down the weight" of trying to "prove" their experiences of racial injustice to White congregants to avoid burdening the congregation on its journey towards a heavenly finish line.[9] Meanwhile, Greg Boyd of Woodland Hills described White supremacy as a spiritual "stronghold" that has held the White church in America "captive" to a heretical idea, and colleague Osheta Moore invited congregants to become "kingdom people," antiracist peacemakers who take up spiritual warfare against the systemic evils like White supremacy that inhabit the "kingdom of this world."[10] These examples suggest that space and mobility metaphors based upon biblical texts figure significantly into the constitutive work performed by evangelical theological discourse. Overall, clusters of metaphors played a crucial role in how Twin Cities evangelical megachurch pastors mediated foundational theological commitments into constitutive guidance for their audiences about how to respond to George Floyd's death and the racial crisis that ensued.

Each of the next three chapters analyzes a sermon series, a set of sequential sermons on a given topic or theme, delivered in the aforementioned evangelical megachurches during church services that occurred in the days and weeks after George Floyd's death. I argue that metaphoric criticism offers rhetorical critics a valuable tool for examining the racially constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors within theological discourses. Examining the clusters of metaphors deployed within these sermons uncovers how evangelical theological discourse constructs subjectivities that variously orient congregants to accept or ignore the racial status quo, view the maintenance of their spiritual practices as more appropriate than material intervention against racism, oppose dialogue about race as a threat to Christian unity, view evangelical theology as a driving force for meaningful engagement with victims of racial injustice, and more. Though all of these sermons contain surface-level messages about showing

love for others regardless of race, delving into the clusters of metaphors deployed within them uncovers constitutive work performed beneath the surface that, in some cases, constructs subjectivities that respond apathetically to racial injustice, accept rationalizations of an unjust status quo, and even denigrate members of racial minority groups. The harmful implications of these metaphors may not be obvious to auditors given their figurative nature and given that many of them are based upon familiar biblical narratives and imagery. In other cases, metaphoric clusters mediate theology into guidance that challenges the status quo by attempting to constitute evangelical congregants as agents of meaningful social change. Analysis of this rhetoric will deepen rhetorical scholarship's understanding of metaphors and their constitutive functions within theological discourse. Specifically, I draw conclusions for scholars of evangelicalism and evangelical rhetoric regarding how particular forms of metaphor use may shape the subjectivities of evangelical congregations. I also critique forms of metaphor use that exacerbate divisions between predominantly-White megachurches and racially diverse communities and highlight examples of messages with the potential to ameliorate those divisions. The remainder of this chapter articulates my critical rhetorical perspective, examines relevant features of evangelical theological discourse, provides a rationale for my selection of texts, and previews the chapters to come.

Critical Perspective

To unpack the subjectivity-shaping influence of metaphors within evangelical megachurch pastors' theological rhetoric, I turn to metaphoric cluster criticism as a method of analysis. My approach to metaphoric criticism is informed by a constitutive perspective that recognizes that the constitutive implications of a discourse may extend beyond its immediate

persuasive effects. Metaphors are not solely constitutive in nature or function, but an emphasis on the constitutive work that they perform enables a focused analysis of the subjectivities that evangelical megachurch pastors offered to their congregants. I also draw upon space and mobility scholarship to enrich my understanding of space and mobility metaphors and their racial implications. While not all of the metaphors found in the discourse at hand are spatial in nature, space and mobility metaphors play a significant role in the clusters of metaphors that evangelical megachurch rhetors deployed as they constituted the relationships between their congregants and the surrounding communities. This section reviews these areas of scholarship and articulates the critical perspective that informs my analysis of those metaphoric clusters.

Constitutive Rhetoric

Building upon McGee's observation that the "political identity" of a group begins as an "ideological fiction" that becomes materially consequential as people embody it, Charland develops a theory of constitutive rhetoric to account for the ways that rhetoric forges and shapes those identities.[11] Constitutive rhetoric begins with interpellation, the rhetorical act that first addresses an audience as a "collective subject."[12] Ongoing rhetorics build upon that initial address by "fostering an identification that supersedes individual or class interests."[13] Constitutive rhetoric posits "a transhistorical subject" by constructing and inviting audiences to inhabit a subjectivity that transcends the constraints of literal time via narrative identification.[14] By situating those collective identities within already-complete narratives, audiences are presented with the illusion of free choice but must ultimately carry out the pattern of the narrative if they are to maintain consistency with it.[15] Instead of focusing on the initial formation of congregational identities at evangelical megachurches, I am interested in the subjectivities offered to congregants in the context of the racial crisis in the Twin Cities.

Rhetorical critics operating from a constitutive perspective view auditors as participants who choose to embody the persuasive discourses that address them. Critics consider how the positioning of "speaker, speech, audience, topic, and occasion" are themselves rhetorical effects.[16] Constitutive rhetoric positions the subjectivities that it posits in relation to "political, social, and economic action in the material world," thereby inviting auditors who inhabit those subjectivities to embrace some courses of action and avoid others.[17] The audience's entry into that participation occurs "logically prior" to the persuasive messaging of a text because that messaging relies upon the presence of an "always already" constituted subject who, in many cases, has also already been racialized.[18] The subjectivities that auditors inhabit are not final but are rather shaped by ongoing discourse and therefore subject to the possibilities of rejection, resistance, and reconstitution.[19] Critics attend to that ongoing process to understand how rhetoric shapes group identities and intergroup relations.

Often, constitutive rhetorics rely upon the rejection or denigration of certain subjectivities in the process of constituting others. Palczewski refers to this as the constitution of an "abject other."[20] This type of rhetoric is especially prevalent in times of crisis. Morus notes that when a sudden or violent crisis destabilizes a group's identity, rhetoric may work to reconstitute the damaged identity and orient it against a scapegoat by emphasizing the group's historic victimization, expressing fear of the scapegoated "other," and drawing upon mythic narratives of the past.[21] Narratives of victimization offer a compelling collective identity to those depicted as victims and offer justifications for hatred of or violence towards those depicted as victimizers.[22] This type of constitutive rhetoric is common among evangelicals, including in media texts that construct White Christians as "marginalized subjects" fighting against anti-Christian discrimination enacted by other publics.[23] Narratives about religion and the past can also "create

the impression of heightened cosmic stakes that have been known to legitimize white Christians' sense of marginality" and thereby fuel hatred and violence.[24] Constitutive rhetoric's capacity to normalize the mistreatment of an abject other is of particular concern to me as I analyze evangelical metaphor use given the movement's history of racist discourse. Such dynamics call for sensitivity on the part the rhetorical critic. Attention to both "inclusion and expulsion" is necessary to avoid falling into normative, White-centric perspectives that have dominated critical disciplines in the past.[25]

Another reason to study theological discourse from a constitutive perspective is constitutive rhetoric's prevalence within America's sermonic and political rhetorical traditions. Constitutive rhetoric has been an integral component of American sermons since the colonial era and remains a meaningful part of the nation's political and religious discourse today. By presenting theological argumentation from a position of religious authority, clergy situate their congregations in relation to the theological, ecclesiastical, political, and social concerns of the day. New England's Puritans, forebears of the evangelical movement, ascribed to clergy an authoritative position as "the Lord's messengers" that afforded clergy "significant power to shape and direct entire communities" through their sermons.[26] The constitutive work of those sermons echoes in the persistence of a rhetorical form known as the jeremiad in American political discourse. This three-part pattern elucidates a biblical principle or norm, critiques the community's failure to live up to that norm, and offers a "prophetic vision of the utopia to come if only the people would repent and reform."[27] Colonial-era Puritan ministers used this form to constitute their congregants as participants in a narrative of ongoing struggle to achieve God's vision of a covenantal community that upholds its commitments to each individual, a theme broadly echoed later in King's bounced "promissory note" and Obama's threatened "American

promise."[28] Though my analysis does not focus on the jeremiad, these examples highlight constitutive rhetoric's important influence within religious communities and its potential to rally community members towards a common approach to issues of social justice. In addition to its religious and political significance, constitutive rhetoric is specifically important within the evangelical rhetorical tradition.

Constitutive rhetoric has long suffused evangelical political and social discourse, often in ways that discourage evangelicals from engaging in social reform. Rhetoric based upon eschatology, theology about Christ's return to judge and rule over the earth, situates evangelicals within already-compete narratives in which God's triumph over sinful society is already assured. Rooted in New Testament teachings, evangelical theological discourse prompts evangelicals to adopt a transhistorical subjectivity as citizens of a divine kingdom that is both "now and not yet" and will only fully emerge following that apocalyptic judgment.[29] Assurance in this fate leads many evangelicals to accept societal decline as inevitable, but the "not yet" aspect of that subjectivity has also served as a warrant within certain forms of conservative political and social advocacy that claim that America is a Christian nation and call believers to fight to preserve it from moral decay. Jerry Falwell Sr., the rhetorical figurehead of the Moral Majority movement, situated evangelical congregants within a cultural war for America and advocated for an "advanced, industrial strength, conservative born-again Christianity" that sought to forestall God's judgment by preserving traditional morality.[30] During Obama's presidency, evangelical pastors used storytelling to "illustrate their own subjectivity as citizens and Christians" and build "an American narrative of personal and national faith" that situated America as "providentially blessed but also in need of believers willing to take more seriously their duty to live out their

sacred calls."[31] These powerful narratives of cultural warfare and apocalyptic decline interweave religious zeal and national destiny, influencing how evangelical speak about social issues.

Because of its emphases on preservation and traditional morality, evangelical constitutive discourse frequently positions congregants as proponents of the societal status quo. Pastoral rhetoric often privileges Christian notions of unity above social protest or dissent. Martin points out that though this trend doesn't necessarily mean that evangelical pastors hold personal animus towards marginalized constituencies, it does indicate that "defending the country and maintaining its presumed exceptional status always comes before any person or group, no matter how at-risk they may be."[32] In a subsequent section, I discuss the role of theological argumentation in advocating for that status quo. Rather than acknowledging the struggles unique to marginalized groups and calling for collaboration to achieve structural change, evangelical teachings grounded in notions of American exceptionalism and national abundance combine with an emphasis on an individualistic message of personal salvation to encourage evangelicals to view "the individual in harm's way" as an abject figure who is personally responsible for seeking God's help to resolve their own problems.[33] An implication of this view is that congregants need not concern themselves with participation in social reform efforts as long as they continue to participate in the church's efforts to share that message of salvation. This hallmark emphasis on the salvation of the individual also shows up in the evangelical sermons that I analyze.

The following analytical chapters examine and critique the subjectivities that evangelical megachurch sermons construct for congregants and consider their impact on race relations in the context of a racial controversy. In sermons delivered in the days following George Floyd's death, evangelical megachurch pastors used a variety of metaphors that configured the Twin Cities as

New Testament Samaria, Old Testament Jericho, a spiritual battleground, and more. These metaphors are central to these sermons' constitutive work, inviting the predominantly White congregations of evangelical megachurches to inhabit subjectivities based upon roles such as warrior, endurance runner, and peacemaker while casting community members and racial minority church members in a variety of roles ranging from enemy, inferior, and burden to recipient of compassion and potential ally. To unpack those metaphors and their constitutive implications, I turn to metaphoric criticism.

Metaphoric Criticism and Constitutive Rhetoric

Metaphoric criticism examines how the metaphors within rhetorical texts attempt to influence auditors' perspectives on themselves, their surroundings, and the range of actions available to them in relation to social issues and crises. Rhetorical critics engage in metaphoric criticism by analyzing how the metaphors within a text generate "a particular world view, reality, or perspective for those involved with it."[34] Taking a pragmatic approach, critics consider the varied purposes for which rhetors might use metaphors in public discourse and unpack the implications of the meanings that they offer to auditors.[35] Metaphors are far more than mere verbal flourishes. Deployed artfully, metaphors are often "the linguistic origin of our most compelling arguments."[36] By examining the artistry with which rhetors employ metaphor in specific texts, rhetoricians uncover how metaphor influences "the fate and culture of a people."[37] That artistry emerges from how a rhetor links disparate concepts.

Fundamentally, a metaphor consists of a rhetor's expression of a concept from one frame of reference in terms of a concept from another frame of reference, a phenomenon that Burke describes as "discussing this *in terms of* that."[38] Rhetors who deploy metaphors thereby invite auditors to set aside "normal categorical and referential constraints" and accept a special

application of meanings.[39] Rhetors deploying metaphors borrow images or concepts related to one domain to serve as vehicles for offering auditors "perspectives" on tenors, concepts related to the domain being described.[40] Alongside metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, metaphor is one of four "master tropes" that crosses the dividing line between figurative language and literal language.[41] The "carrying-over" of language "from one realm into another" in metaphor involves both congruity and incongruity because the two "realms" being compared share significant features but are never exactly alike.[42] For example, as Butterworth observes, the rhetorical efficacy of sport/war metaphors relies on auditors' perception that athletics and warfare are two distinct domains, but which temporarily can be likened through the rhetor's skill.[43] By shaping how they perceive the conceptual congruities and incongruities between those domains, a rhetor may invite auditors to adopt new ways of viewing the subjects at hand. Metaphors also filter the perceptions of auditors.

Metaphor may enable a rhetor to "smooth over" contradictions by "filtering in" certain perceptions and "filtering out" others.[44] Rhetors may also deploy metaphoric language to direct auditors towards a rhetor's favored perspective on a subject and away from perspectives that are unfavorable to the rhetor.[45] This can obscure some of the possible solutions for addressing issues of public concern and make other solutions appear to be the obvious choice.[46] In the chapters that follow, I consider how some evangelical race sermons present individual spiritual practices rather than socially-engaged reform efforts as the appropriate solution to the racial crisis in the Twin Cities. This type of metaphoric filtering can be debilitating to the public's efforts to confront complicated social issues. Metaphoric criticism's emphasis on perspectives and possibilities for social action align with a constitutive perspective.

Metaphors exert constitutive influence on audiences who accept them. Metaphoric language both reflects and constitutes the "conceptual worlds" that human beings inhabit.[47] Language conditions how audiences understand the world around them, and a text's construction of social reality often hinges upon a rhetor's choice of metaphor.[48] The constitutive conditioning of an audience's perspective may occur regardless of whether a rhetor achieves any direct persuasive aims. Hostetler warns critics that an approach to metaphoric criticism that focuses solely on whether a speech is an immediate persuasive success risks ignoring the "guiding or constitutive ends" achieved by deftly-constructed metaphors.[49] An approach that considers those guiding ends may enable the critic to observe aspects of the rhetorical situation that they might otherwise overlook.[50] For example, Leeman observes that although both King and his critics considered his 1967 anti-war speech at Riverside Church a persuasive failure due to the negative response of his immediate audience, the speech supplied a Social Gospel-based "theological vocabulary" that subsequently equipped members of King's extended audience to "move from quiet unease about the Vietnam War to voiced opposition."[51] By examining the constitutive work performed via the deployment of metaphors, critics may observe how rhetoric supplies audiences with frameworks for understanding their subjectivities within the context of world events.[52]

Rhetors often use metaphors to justify aggression towards those whom rhetors position as enemies. Metaphors of violence and conflict offer people potent ways of making sense of situations and may therefore become so deeply woven into public conversations that they become almost indistinguishable from "plain" speech. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of military metaphors such as invasion, fight, victory, and battle to describe efforts to contain the spread of the virus became so "conventionalized" within medical discourse that those terms may now appear "natural" rather than metaphorical.[53] Metaphors of violence may help rhetors express

how to combat a deadly virus, but rhetors may also use warlike metaphors to direct hostility towards human targets. In times of war, American presidents have often deployed violent metaphors that characterize an enemy as "savage" and "cunning but otherwise irrational" to justify acts of war.[54] Citing Lakoff's critique of how both Bush presidents conflated hero and victim metaphors to justify wars abroad, Butterworth likewise notes that metaphors "can kill" because of their "potential to enable violence and injustice."[55] Evangelical discourse is neither a stranger to metaphors that blend heroism and victimage nor to metaphors that justify hostility.

Evangelicals often deploy "culture war" metaphors that figure congregants as victims of "a supposedly hostile public sphere."[56] Rhetoric emphasizing distinctions between those who are for God and those who are against him articulate evangelical identity in contrast to the abject, opposing identity of the unbeliever who is often portrayed as hostile. Lundberg argues that as evangelicals engage with texts that position them as the targets of non-evangelical communities, they find rationales for claiming "to carry out the Christian conviction to love the other while also treating certain non-evangelical others in decidedly inhospitable ways."[57] Taking inspiration from the New Testament metaphor that envisions each individual Christian as a part or "member" of "the body of Christ," the portrayal of Christ's suffering in *The Passion* "identifies almost seamlessly with conservative evangelical Christian discourses about the culture war" by framing the "body" of the evangelical community as a victim of non-Christian aggressors.[58] Culture war rhetors often find use for the militaristic and athletic metaphors found in the New Testament writings of Paul. Both categories of metaphor were heavily adopted by the "muscular Christianity movement" of the 1990s that formed as a reaction to feminist advancements.[59] An evangelical men's organization called the Promise Keepers used military and sports metaphors that reified dualistic notions of order by naming clear winners and losers in society to constitute

men as displaced leaders who must "take back" positions of leadership in the family and home.[60] Martin notes that deploying culture war metaphors like these enables megachurch pastors to "create and re-create a conservative worldview" from week to week in the "nation's largest evangelical churches."[61] These examples illustrate how extensively metaphors of conflict influence evangelical approaches to cultural engagement and social issues. Though metaphor may sustain cultural hostilities, metaphor also offers rhetors a tool for challenging the social status quo.

Metaphor equips rhetors to open up new possibilities by challenging established beliefs and social orders. Competing symbol systems defined by root metaphors form the basis of struggles over "whose truth – that is, whose root metaphor" defines a political community.[62] For that reason, rhetorical critics sometimes view metaphors as rivals competing to become the "master concept" within a given discursive context or hierarchy of meanings.[63] The outcomes of such contests influence the direction public life.[64] Prevailing in a clash of metaphor may require a rhetor to employ metaphor thoughtfully. Ivie argues that dissenting against a dominant ideology within a democratic context requires rhetors to perform the "trick" of speaking within the vocabulary of that ideology while also sufficiently challenging its conventions; metaphor enables the dissenting "trickster" to both disrupt and affirm by "reframing perceived realities based on relations of difference and similarity."[65] Ivie cautions that the trickster must balance a tension between maintaining a "sharp edge" to "challenge prevailing attitudes, beliefs, or polices" and maintaining a "corresponding affirmation of sanctioned ways of thinking and feeling" to avoid creating alienation.[66] Using metaphoric re-description to invite shifts in perspective, rhetors must attempt to "locate reorienting terms with enough edge to denature and trouble repressive political orthodoxies" while at the same time avoiding "sheer antagonism" by

articulating "linkages between adversaries."[67] By challenging foundational metaphors, rhetors articulate new ways of thinking about social issues. For example, feminist author Mary Daly inverted the Christian notion of "the Fall" into a metaphor for a good rather than evil to advocate for a "woman-identified consciousness" that challenges a masculine social order.[68] These essays highlight metaphor's role in shaping the contours of the ideological clashes and social relations that define public life.

Metaphoric Clusters

A single metaphor may be a crucial influence, but multiple metaphors may also cohere into influential structures of meaning. Metaphors that occur together often form meaningful patterns, so rhetorical critics frequently analyze clusters of metaphors using a method called cluster criticism. Jamieson notes that while individual metaphors frequently solicit critical interest, sometimes a "skein of metaphors taken together weaves a pattern that is at least coherent and at best compelling."[69] Whether contained within a single text or diffused through a group of texts linked to a particular rhetor or context, metaphoric clusters can characterize a particular time and people group and thereby provide critics a perspective on "metaphor in action" in the process of articulating and offering auditors a vision of social reality.[70] When a rhetor introduces successive metaphors into a discourse, those metaphors interact with metaphoric meanings already present to produce layered meanings. Farrell and Goodnight demonstrate how the acceptance of successive root metaphors "gradually sedimented" discourse about technology such that it constrained how the public responded to a nuclear crisis.[71] A similar process shapes the social realities of race. Houdek contends that a process of metaphoric sedimentation draws upon a "reservoir of racially-inflected fragments" and codifies them into "a set of racist beliefs, norms, and common-sense assumptions" that rationalize racialized police brutality.[72] By

examining how rhetors weave together and layer metaphors, rhetorical critics build upon Burke's observation that human motives can be most directly observed by methods that inquire into clusters of terms and the functions they perform.[73] Those functions are varied.

In addition to carrying out the functions of individual metaphors, clusters of metaphors serve constitutive functions such as sharpening moral contrasts between groups and developing complex structures of meanings that enable rhetors to navigate the often equally complex belief systems of communities that share ideological or doctrinal commitments. Clusters of metaphors that contrast opposing terms using archetypal concepts such as light and dark or spatial concepts like up and down "facilitate audience commitment by converting problems of value into sharply drawn moral decisions."[74] These types of metaphor also afford leaders the opportunity to craft and inhabit compelling and favorable "symbolic roles" of group leadership such as "bringers of the light," leaders of mighty moral armies, or captains heroically charting courses through troubled seas.[75] The complex formations of meaning produced by clusters of metaphors address the unique rhetorical needs of ideologically- or doctrinally-bound communities such as churches within the various traditions found within the American Christian landscape. Graves observes this in the way that early Quaker preachers negotiated theological tensions between their beliefs in the ongoing revelation of truth from God and in the authority of canonized scripture by using scriptural metaphors that stayed within "conceptual boundaries" that were "acceptable to their audiences' sense of reality."[76] For evangelicals, such metaphor use is often constrained by theologies and social values that I address later in this chapter.

Prompted by the scholarship discussed in this section, my analysis examines the constitutive work performed by evangelical megachurch pastors' metaphor use. Metaphoric cluster criticism offers a tool for examining how the metaphors within a discourse invite auditors

to view themselves and the actions available to them within the context of a crisis. Approaching those metaphors from a constitutive perspective invites attention to language that positions auditors in relation to the circumstances at hand, which may or may not work in concert with a text's calls to action. This type of examination is greatly needed in the context of evangelical racial discourse. Analyzing clusters of metaphors that develop and in some cases clash across several sermons enables me to draw conclusions about the subjectivities that each pastor and church constructed and offered to their congregations and to other auditors in the midst of the racial crisis. In this case, I specifically consider the implications of using biblical spaces such as Samaria, Jericho, the Kingdom of God, and more as metaphors for the Twin Cities. Each of those metaphors and the clusters of metaphors surrounding them has constitutive implications for whether evangelical congregants view themselves as heroic culture warriors or as compassionate allies, as victims or as agents of change, and as enemies or as neighbors to the racially diverse communities surrounding their churches. Even sermons calling auditors to engage in racial justice work may contain constitutive work that offers congregants antagonistic, passive, or otherwise problematic subjectivities to inhabit in the midst of a racial crisis. Mindful that rhetoric attempting to justify racial injustice's persistent presence in American culture has become increasingly covert in recent years, I am likewise concerned with the way that metaphors in evangelical theological discourse may denigrate the residents of racially diverse communities by tapping into racialized spatial meanings and racist tropes. Rhetorical scholarship recognizes spatial discourse as a meaningful influence on racial identity and race relations, but it has yet to investigate the constitutive work performed by space and mobility metaphors within theological discourse.

Space and Mobility Metaphors

Given that evangelical megachurch sermons about George Floyd used the representations of space and movement found in biblical texts as metaphors for the Twin Cities and the racial crisis, I turn to rhetorical studies of space and mobility to enhance my approach to reading the metaphoric clusters in these sermons. I propose that metaphoric cluster criticism supplies a useful method for reading space and mobility metaphors and the crucial role that they play within theological discourses. Space and mobility scholarship provides a helpful critical backdrop for understanding how discursive intersections of space and race have shaped American public life. Echoing a broader "spatial turn" influenced by the writings of Doreen Massey, Henri Lefebvre, Manuel Castells, and other geographers and social theorists, rhetorical studies of space highlight the role of discourse in shaping the relationship between social interaction and material space.[77] These theorists posit that discourse about spaces and their material features give them their social context and that rhetorically-shaped spatial perspectives, not "natural givens," define our spatial world.[78] In this case, the spatial metaphors deployed by evangelical megachurch pastors offer auditors interpretations of the relationships between their largely-White, largely-suburban megachurches and the racially diverse urban communities that they neighbor.

Rhetorical studies of space also attend to the constitutive role of spatial language in the production of racialized subjectivities and the social realities of race and racism.[79] Verbal representations of space, including metaphors, produce "moral economies of place" by assigning racialized meanings that are often harmfully negative to spaces and their inhabitants.[80] This includes discourse that links the urban space of the ghetto to Black skin and to stigmatizing tropes like the "Black male criminal" and the promiscuous "welfare queen," dangerous and

chaotic figures who are not welcome in White suburban space.[81] Due to a long history of racist practices and representations, American urban spaces are laden with racialized meanings like these that denigrate and constrain people in racial minority groups.[82] Dating back to slavery and segregation, police and vigilantes alike have imposed both implicit and explicit "race rules" that declare certain spaces "off limits" to racial minorities.[83] Practices such as red-lining, which involved the denial of housing opportunities to Black applicants, and the creation of spaces such as sundown towns, towns that violently attacked or drove out Black people found in town after nightfall, served similar functions of separation and containment throughout the twentieth century.[84] These practices often divided suburban spaces marked as White from urban spaces marked as Black. Though these racial histories do not totally govern the present-day spatial meanings of American cities, they remain felt during interactions between Black Americans and police officers.[85] Because of this, my metaphoric criticism of evangelical megachurch sermons is sensitive to the ways that the metaphoric language used to describe the space of the Twin Cities and its inhabitants may play into these racialized spatial meanings.

To augment studies of space, rhetorical scholars also examine discursive representations of mobility to draw attention not just to the way space is represented rhetorically, but to analyze how people make use of those spaces both ideologically and materially. Mobility consists of "movement, representation, and practice."[86] Physical movements and practices provide the "raw material for the production of mobility," but it is "the representations, ideologies, and meanings attached to both movement and stillness" that give them their social meaning.[87] This type of discourse may solidify barriers between groups or naturalize the inequitable use of power by one group against another.[88] Such inequities certainly are visible in police brutality and racialized surveillance incidents that target Black people and deprive them of their basic rights, threatening

them with physical or psychological harm should they "move through material and discursive space" in a way that does not meet with the approval of the dominant White gaze.[89] Because of these harmful possibilities, my analysis of evangelical megachurch pastors' metaphor use is also sensitive to the possibility that their discourse may represent mobilities and immobilities in ways that rationalize unjust practices or social inequalities within the context of the racial crisis.

My use of metaphoric cluster criticism to read space and mobility metaphors offers a friendly addition to existing approaches to rhetorical studies of space and mobility. Rhetorical scholars have long recognized metaphors as a theoretical resource for examining rhetorical behavior, ideology, and intersectional experiences.[90] That work provides a basis for also bringing metaphors of space and mobility into view as I analyze evangelical discourse. Metaphoric cluster criticism and its emphasis on the formation of larger structures of meaning offers critics productive alternative emphasis to other approaches to analysis of space and mobility discourse. For example, Harris chooses a mobility framework that "calls attention to discursive markers of scale, connection, time, and agency" as a framework for analyzing space and mobility discourses rather than emphasizing metaphor because only some of those varied discursive markers are metaphoric in nature.[91] Metaphoric methods may not be ideal for examining space and mobility discourse in all cases. However, in this case, markers of space and mobility frequently occurred in metaphoric form and were accompanied by additional metaphors that cohered into the kinds of larger structures of meaning for which cluster criticism accounts. Such an emphasis equips critics to uncover the meanings produced by the deployment of clusters of diffuse, varied, and even clumsily-implemented metaphors. Metaphoric criticism of evangelical theological discourse uncovers space and mobility metaphors that have constitutive implications for how auditors respond to the material context of a racial controversy.

My analysis also responds to scholarly calls for new ways of reading spatial discourse and critiquing the harmful influence that racialized spatial rhetorics have on the lives of those marginalized by them. Harris implores rhetorical scholars to continue developing ways of reading space and mobility rhetorics that "lurk" within our public discourse wherein they influence political subjectivities, often in harmfully racializing ways.[92] Addressing that harm, Flores argues that brutal practices of stoppage achieve "debilitating materiality" when political subjectivities reflect racist legacies and calls for rhetorical investigation into when and where "humanity is allowed or effaced."[93] These subjectivities are produced, in part, through everyday metaphor use that constitutes a "common-sense" form of racism that rationalizes police brutality against Black Americans.[94] Shaped and justified by such discourse, practices of stoppage carry out the constitutive production of "subjected bodies," often in brutally immobilizing fashion.[95] Such practices are on graphic display in the brutal murder of George Floyd. Rather than focusing directly on those practices, this dissertation investigates the constitutive rhetoric that produces the conceptual ground upon which they rest: rhetoric offering auditors subjectivities that embrace apathetic or antagonistic responses to racial injustice. Harris's notion of lurking is especially applicable to evangelical theological discourse because it connotes a menacing force that conceals itself until it has the opportunity to cause harm. Later in this chapter, I discuss how contemporary evangelical theological discourse is rarely explicitly racist but rather employs subtle or euphemistic ways of rationalizing a racially unjust status quo. By analyzing evangelical sermons, I reveal how that the constitutive work performed by space and mobility metaphors often creates and reinforces harmful racialized meanings while lurking beneath the surface of colorblind messages about love for others that are unlikely to read as explicitly racist to evangelical auditors.

This dissertation engages in a metaphoric cluster criticism of evangelical sermons about race that gives particular attention to metaphors of space and mobility that have constitutive implications for race relations and the relationships between predominantly-White Twin Cities megachurch congregations and the surrounding communities within the context of a racial crisis. Analyzing the clusters of metaphors deployed within the theological argumentation of evangelical megachurch pastors reveals how clusters of metaphors participate in the constitution of subjectivities for auditors that, when inhabited, shape their responses to social issues like race. Evangelicalism has a long history of rhetoric attempting to influence how both congregants and the wider public think about and respond to race issues, often by offering theological bulwarks for a societal status quo in which racial injustice is the norm. My analysis of megachurch sermons contributes to studies of evangelical rhetoric by critiquing metaphoric clusters that prompt evangelicals to resist or ignore calls for racial reform and highlights metaphoric clusters that instead work to challenge the status quo. First, however, an understanding of American evangelicalism's theological and racial rhetoric is a necessary backdrop for that discussion.

Evangelical Social Issue Rhetoric, Theology, and Race

Evangelicalism's longstanding cultural and political influence upon American society and the movement's history of racist discourse point to the need for robust understandings of evangelical theological discourse, including the sermons that pastors routinely preach to their gathered congregations, and its racial implications. This section situates that discourse within the context of evangelicalism's history, its approach to social issue rhetoric, and its approach to race rhetoric to lay a critical foundation for my analysis of Twin Cities megachurch sermons from the summer of 2020. In doing so, I answer Flores's call for "racial rhetorical criticism" that is

"reflective about and engages the persistence of racial oppression, logics, voices, and bodies" and "theorizes the very production of race as rhetorical."[96] By conducting "historically grounded analyses of race" that acknowledge the persistence of "race and racist thought within the nation," rhetorical critics derive "correctives and insights" that shed light upon race's ongoing rhetorical manifestations.[97] My reading of contemporary evangelical theological discourse is informed by scholarship that details how evangelicals have previously used theological discourse to address race issues. Evangelical race rhetoric ranges from the blatantly racist interpretations of scripture that White supremacist rhetors used to rationalize slavery to the subtler theological arguments that contemporary evangelicals have used to rationalize the current racial status quo and the liberatory interpretations of scripture advanced by abolitionists, civil rights advocates, and Social Gospel rhetors. The remainder of this section reviews evangelicalism's theological commitments and discusses how evangelical rhetors have historically applied those commitments to race.

The evangelical faith tradition began as an eighteenth-century Protestant religious movement in Europe and America that focused on evangelism: the practice of sharing the Christian gospel message of Christ's atonement for sin through his death on the cross and the need of every individual to personally trust in him for eternal salvation.[98] Today, scholars often identify American evangelicalism by both its theological beliefs and its social values. This results in the identification of "an amorphous group" that includes congregants in numerous nondenominational churches and megachurches as well as in denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention.[99]

Evangelicalism's present-day theological discourse and position in American society reflect twentieth-century social and political shifts.[100] Following a period of hegemony, modernist intellectual shifts towards evolutionism, religious skepticism, and relativism weakened

evangelicalism in the early twentieth century.[101] The fundamentalist movement that swept through evangelicalism at that time pushed back with rhetoric that affirmed "the supernatural character of religion, the objectivity of Christian morality, and the timeless validity of Scripture," but it also cultivated tendencies towards ardent supernaturalism, separatism, and a lack of reflexivity about the historical character of evangelical theological thought.[102] The Scopes trial of 1925 convinced evangelicals that "the larger culture was hostile to them" and sent them into an inward-focused period of rebuilding.[103] They "retreated into a subculture" and created a "defensive bulwark" consisting of a network of congregations, denominations, seminaries, Bible camps, publishing houses, media companies, and mission societies.[104] This resulted in an "infrastructure of impressive magnitude and strength" and a reactionary approach to public discourse that both persist today.[105]

Evangelicals of later decades renewed their focus on influencing the wider culture to reflect their traditionalistic social values. In the 1940s, moderate evangelical leaders including Billy Graham sought to achieve a culturally engaged voice in American public discourse by shedding fundamentalism's anti-intellectualism, separatism, and militant rhetorical style while retaining its core theological commitments.[106] These "neoevangelicals" blended the fundamentalist insistence on scriptural authority with a renewed effort to shape public culture. Steering that engagement in a political direction, Jerry Falwell built the Moral Majority movement of the 1970s with culture war rhetoric calling evangelicals to defend patriarchal authority in the family and oppose abortion and homosexuality.[107] The Moral Majority movement led to the formation of the Christian Right, a political alliance that developed into a "longstanding electoral and rhetorical bond between White evangelicals and the GOP."[108] Reflecting upon the enduring nature of that bond, Du Mez argues that today's evangelicals are

best described as people who "watch Fox News, consider themselves religious, and vote Republican" as they live out a "God-and-country faith" that is racially White and traditional in its political and social values.[109]

Over those decades of increasingly political social engagement, evangelicals cultivated a reactionary approach to social issue rhetoric that addresses congregants with messages about preserving the status quo of church and nation against what it portrays as culturally erosive forces. That status quo is typically predicated on mythic notions of America as an exceptional Christian nation. Neoevangelical leaders of the 1940s taught congregants that Christians could use political and social engagement to ameliorate global issues like economic depression and war.[110] Later, when reacting to the women's movement and sexual revolution of the 1960s, Moral Majority evangelicals sought to "reverse the tide of feminism in the United States" by forming organizations like Focus on the Family that produced rhetoric attempting to elevate masculine authority and "reassert the mythic ideal of feminine spirituality and domesticity."[111] More recently, evangelicals reacted to the onset of the Great Recession and the election of Barack Obama, two occurrences that they took as signs of social decline, with messages offering congregants narratives about "protecting [America] from further erosion" and restoring its waning global prominence.[112] Like Floyd's murder, these events challenged the American status quo for which evangelicals typically advocate. I will later show that a similarly status quo-favoring approach has often characterized how evangelicals address race in their theological discourse. Doing so first requires establishing a foundational understanding of that theological discourse.

Reading Theological Discourse

Theological discourse is a vital area of interest for rhetorical critics. Articulating a text-based approach to the rhetorical analysis of theology, Vining defines theology as "discourse about God and God's interactions with the world that acts as interpretive systems" and specifies three rhetorically salient levels of theology.[113] At the broadest level, theological traditions may influence the invention of individual rhetorical texts. At the narrowest level, rhetors express the personal theology that consists of their own beliefs. Additionally, rhetors' statements are most likely "influenced by the situation or need that has encouraged the rhetor to speak at that moment."[114] Textual theology comprises the textually observable level of theology that mediates between the broad and narrow levels and shapes how auditors interpret them. Rhetorical methods of analysis enable critics to identify how language conveys textual theology and reveal the interpretive frameworks that texts offer to auditors.[115] Where Vining uses terministic screens, cluster-agon analysis, and narrative arc analysis to examine textual theology within a social action sermon, I use metaphoric cluster criticism and a constitutive perspective to examine theological argumentation in the racial crisis sermons of Twin Cities megachurches. I view preaching as the production of rhetorical statements that, reflecting theological traditions as well as each pastor's individual theology and perception of their rhetorical situation, mediate theology into constitutive guidance that offers auditors subjectivities to inhabit as they navigate their social context. Rhetorical scholars already understand metaphors to be an important influence on the perspectives of auditors, but I propose that metaphors play a particularly meaningful role in the process of mediating theology into constitutive guidance regarding social issues and are therefore worthy of attention from rhetorical critics. Reading the mediating work performed by

textual theology within evangelical sermons requires a working understanding of evangelical theology and how evangelical rhetors speak about it.

Theologian Michael F. Bird explains that evangelicals view theology as a study of God that is "learned, lived, sung, preached, prayed, and renewed through the dynamic interactions between God and his people."[116] Evangelicals view preaching as the proclamation and interpretation of the Bible as the "Word of God."[117] Because they are typically not organized around the creedal dictates or hierarchical authority of a denominational structure, evangelical megachurch congregations are highly reliant upon the theological rhetoric found in the sermons of their pastors to constitute their communal identity and values. That does not mean that evangelical commitments begin and end with the teachings of individual pastors. Historians and theologians identify four doctrines, sometimes called "Bebbington's quadrilateral," as the defining cornerstones of evangelical theology.[118] These consist of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism, and an emphasis on reform.[119] Subsequent chapters discuss other theological concepts that are relevant to the specific sermons that I analyze, but these four cornerstone doctrines merit elaboration now because of their fundamental influence on how pastors within the evangelical preaching tradition speak to their congregations and address the wider public.

Beliefs in the divine authority and historicity of the Bible create both potent rhetorical advantages and limiting rhetorical constraints for evangelical megachurch pastors. Also known as the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, biblicism is the theological belief that the Bible is fully accurate in every detail.[120] Where some Christian traditions hold that "marks of human fallibility" intermingle with divine inspiration in the biblical texts, evangelicals hold that God's flawless nature means that the Bible must necessarily be "fully true and without error" because it is a message from him.[121] Evangelicals ascribe the weight of divine authority to the Bible and

tend to interpret it seriously and literally, though they do selectively understand some passages to be figurative.[122] Biblical inerrancy developed out of the fundamentalists' strident reaction to the secularization of American culture. This doctrine offered them reassurance about the correctness of their beliefs as they came to grips with their waning hegemony.[123] Today's evangelical rhetoric widely reflects the same ontological certainty that the fundamentalists derived from this theology and offers congregants the same reassurance that their beliefs and practices are correct regardless of what non-evangelicals say.[124] If a pastor's rhetorical statements align with evangelical congregants' perceptions of what the "true" meaning of the Bible is, that pastor's rhetoric carries the authority and affective weight of God's Word for them. Consequently, the sermons that provide evangelical congregations with interpretations and applications of biblical texts are a meaningful constitutive influence on the subjectivities they inhabit in relation to social issues like race. This theology also places a remarkable constraint upon evangelical rhetors. Pastors who make statements that are contradictory to what congregants accept as aligning with the message of the inerrant Bible are likely to face harsh backlash. I examine an example of this in Chapter 3. Put simply, biblical inerrancy affords evangelical pastors the ability to speak to their congregations with the authority of ultimate truth, but that authority can just as readily work against them if congregants perceive their statements as containing any opposition to that ultimate truth. Evangelicals derive many doctrines from their interpretive approach to scripture, but the most essential of these concerns Christ's death.

Crucicentrism, the theological notion that Christ's crucifixion is an atonement for the sins of any person who believes in him, shapes the value hierarchies present within evangelical rhetoric. The theology of the atonement specifically refers to the notion that the shedding of Christ's sinless blood in his crucifixion was a "ransom" or "redemption" that pays for the divine

penalty incurred by humanity's sins.[125] Promising "salvation, intimacy with God, and a community of fellow believers," evangelical preaching addresses "unbelievers" with messages about God's impending judgment of humanity's sins in the hope that they will accept the "good news" of the gospel message and repent of their sins to become "saved" and gain "eternal life based on the redemptive work of Christ."[126] Reflecting a dual emphasis that dates back to the early days of the evangelical movement, contemporary evangelical sermons typically contain remarks directed at auditors outside of the congregation who may be visiting or watching online as well as remarks directed at congregants seeking encouragement and guidance.[127] Where fundamentalist rhetoric used warlike language to constitute believers as holy saints in God's kingdom fighting to pry the souls of hell-bound sinners from Satan's grasp, contemporary evangelical megachurch rhetoric often uses softer language to construct outsiders as "seekers" working to overcome "reasonable questions and doubts" about the Christian faith while believers serve as winsome guides along that journey.[128] Evangelicalism's heavy rhetorical emphasis on salvation as an individual and personal phenomenon produces a hierarchy of values that elevates the individual soul's eternal destiny over the social aspects of Christ's teachings that are emphasized by rhetors within the Social Gospel tradition.[129] Evangelicals preach that the Bible offers the solution to social ills like racism and economic disparity, but their rhetoric typically treats the resolution of those problems as a secondary effect that converts experience when they accept the evangelical message of individual salvation. Conversionism is an extension of that value hierarchy.

The theology of conversionism, the teaching that Christians should live an outwardly holy lifestyle that reflects their salvation in Christ, plays a central role in evangelical rhetorics of lifestyle and membership.[130] Conversion from "unbeliever" to "believer" by accepting the gospel

message of salvation is a significant moment in an evangelical's life; most evangelicals can describe the circumstances of their conversion, and it is a dramatic and emotional experience for many.[131] Evangelical rhetoric elevates post-conversion life, which is said to include manifestations of God's "felt presence" that provide spiritual comfort and moral guidance towards a more righteous lifestyle, above the sinful and spiritually empty life that it ascribes to the unconverted.[132] This theology equips evangelicals to take comfort in the belief that they are living righteous lives even as racial justice protests like those that followed George Floyd's death claim that those lifestyles are less righteous than they ought to be. Contemporary evangelical megachurch rhetoric frames the Christian lifestyle as a "personal relationship with Jesus" that deepens as congregants attend to evangelical teachings and seek to eliminate sin from their lives.[133] The emphases this rhetoric places on personal morality and avoidance of sinful behavior shape how evangelical megachurches relate to the surrounding culture.

Motivated by views of morality synthesized from biblical texts, evangelical rhetoric reflects a theological emphasis on moral reform that has evolved over the movement's history. The Puritan faith from which evangelicalism sprang did not separate theological or ecclesiastical concerns from social ones, but rather "saw religious significance in public acts and public significance in religious acts."[134] Evangelicals have long sought to morally purify both community and state from sin by influencing public policy with theologically-driven argumentation, but the methods by which they act upon this morally reformative impulse have evolved over time.[135] Unlike their evangelical predecessors who were on the front lines of temperance, anti-poverty, and other reform movements in the previous century, fundamentalist rhetoric began emphasizing individual morality over societal reform in the 1920s.[136] A rhetorical emphasis on the individual's responsibility to turn to God and personally live out a morally

upright lifestyle still characterizes evangelical discourse today. With the rise of the Moral Majority movement in the 1970s, many conservative evangelicals began to embrace political power as the primary means of enforcing their moral values within society.[137] Evangelicalism's theologically-driven social issue rhetoric has meaningfully shaped race relations throughout American history.

Evangelical Theological Discourse and the Racial Status Quo

Evangelical discourse has long contained theological arguments attempting to sustain an unjust racial status quo in American society. In the 1800s, clergy in the American South shaped "the curse of Ham" from Genesis 9 into a justification for subjugating people of African descent.[138] The passage focuses on lineage, not race, but White supremacist rhetors constructed a "taxonomical scheme" that figured Noah's three sons as the progenitors of African, Asian, and European "races."[139] They labeled Africans as the accursed descendants of Ham and argued that God ordained slavery to help them realize their "limited potential."[140] Other theologians argued that this was a poor interpretation of the text, but the rhetorical utility of this interpretation was less about its theological clarity and more about stamping biblical approval onto an existing White supremacist attitude; Black racial inferiority was the argument's "missing term."[141] Eighteenth-century theologians applied a similar hermeneutic to the Tower of Babel narrative in an attempt to justify slavery.[142] Contemporary theologians typically agree that the narrative's depiction of God's scattering of humanity concerns the origin of language differences rather than racial ones, but the eighteenth-century theologians who applied the racial hermeneutic to the narrative used it to stamp divine approval onto racial oppression.[143] This spurious line of theological argumentation persisted well into the twentieth century. In the 1970s, Jerry Falwell Sr. described Black and Hispanic Americans as "God-created, God-ordained" minorities.[144]

Evangelical segregationists also saw rhetorical utility in the racial interpretation of Babel during a 1982 controversy at Bob Jones University over interracial dating policies.[145] Though less explicit, this type of argumentation still lurks within evangelical discourse today.

Theological arguments attempting to rationalize racial divisions or support theories of racial inferiority can still be found lurking within contemporary evangelical theological discourse. Despite its shaky theological underpinnings, rhetoric linking Ham to people of African descent can be found within the comparatively recent race rhetoric of prominent evangelicals like John MacArthur.[146] Contemporary rhetors often cloak the racial dimension of these arguments in euphemistic terms for race like "people group" and "ethnic group." For example, Ken Ham of the creationist advocacy group Answers in Genesis asserts that Babel led to the "formation of people groups (Asians, Caucasians, and so on.)"[147] Ed Vitigliano, the head of an evangelical advocacy group called the American Family Association, argues that most of the physically distinct "ethnic groups" that developed at Babel "refuse to honor and glorify God" and that ethnic conflict will therefore persist until "the end of the age."[148] These arguments present racial division and racial inferiority as divinely-ordained elements of the social status quo. The persistence of this type of rhetoric is among the many reasons for evangelicalism's persistent whiteness.

Evangelical race rhetoric reflects the tradition's White history and White theological lens. Theologian James H. Cone notes that Black Americans have long considered Christianity to be a White faith.[149] This is especially true of evangelicalism, which Butler argues is "synonymous" with cultural and political whiteness.[150] Du Mez likewise describes evangelicalism's "problem of whiteness" as an inability to confront the racially specific elements of its practices, and Nakayama calls for attention to the way that whiteness "is entwined and connected to other

discourses," including evangelical discourses.[151] That problem is rooted in the same racial attitudes that led to the formation of the Black Protestant tradition. When Black people who were enslaved by White Christians perceived dissonance between the Bible's teachings and their experiences of oppression, they formed their own churches to serve as havens for free and liberatory forms of religious expression.[152] Black Protestantism is what Putnam and Campbell call a "legacy of segregation," and the separations that persist between Black and White Christian traditions in America today are a direct consequence of evangelical complicity in White supremacy and race-based oppression.[153] Though the faiths share numerous theological similarities, most Black Protestants still reject the evangelical label because of its racial implications.[154] Contemporary evangelical rhetoric sustains that separation.

Often avoiding explicitly racist rhetoric, contemporary evangelical rhetoric typically employs subtler ways of rationalizing racial inequality and suppressing conversation about race. Racist rhetors adopted a rhetoric of colorblindness in America after the Civil Rights movement and embraced it again after Barack Obama's election.[155] Aware that racial inequalities persist, White Americans often voice indirect rationalizations of their positions of privilege.[156] The result is a "slippery and often subtle" rhetorical style in which White Americans may assert that they are not racist but subsequently make statements that rationalize a lower place for Black Americans in the country's social hierarchy.[157] This type of rhetoric is common within evangelicalism. As House explains, many White evangelicals "believe that Black people are at a social disadvantage due to race," but at the same time "express white denial of how structural oppression promotes unearned social advantage for white people."[158] Additionally, a "racial reconciliation" framework common within evangelical pastoral race rhetoric functions as what Oyakawa calls a "suppressive frame."[159] This rhetoric precludes "consideration of or discussion

about racial justice" by treating those conversations as "political and divisive."[160] Evangelicals also sometimes engage in a rhetoric of post-racism that uses mythic or sanitized depictions of the past to frame race relations as a settled issue that no longer merits discussion.[161] The sermons that I study in the chapters to follow all contain language condemning racism and commending love for others regardless of race, but such language functions as colorblind discourse when used to rationalize an unjust status quo. In other cases, evangelicals simply choose to be silent about race. This "rhetorical omission" is problematic because silence frames "vulnerable groups as mattering less" than adhering to "traditional values" or "simply trusting God that things would be okay."[162] Even when rhetors do speak up, efforts to "transcend" racist histories often fail and result in "new forms of subjugation."[163] Because evangelicals continue to "have agency and power as a voting bloc" and also "wield tremendous power in politics beyond their demographic numbers," rhetoric that shapes how congregations within the evangelical tradition respond to attacks on racially marginalized people has the potential to either exacerbate or alleviate that suffering.[164] American Christianity contains productive alternatives to consider.

Theological discourse in the Social Gospel tradition offers a productive alternative against which to read evangelical theological discourse about race. Black Protestant discourse blends the emphasis on personal piety that is common among evangelicals with "a strong dose of Social Gospel" theology that evangelicalism typically lacks.[165] Where evangelical discourse emphasizes Christ's role as a personal savior who provides individuals with a pathway to heaven and a means of escape from a decaying world, Social Gospel discourse emphasizes Christ's commands to alleviate oppression and care for the suffering as a means of creating "heaven on earth" by transforming society to be more socially just.[166] A rhetorical emphasis on material concerns like poverty and racism over "other-worldly concerns" also distinguishes Social Gospel

discourse from evangelical discourse.[167] This difference in emphasis is evident in the rhetoric that many Black clergy members in the Twin Cities produced in response to George Floyd's death.

While many evangelical megachurch leaders focused on offering guidance and reassurance to their congregants, Black pastors at smaller multiethnic and historically Black Twin Cities churches implored Christians to advocate for systemic change and modeled that engagement on the front lines of racial justice protests. During a meeting in which an association of evangelical ministers called Transform Minnesota planned charity and cleanup efforts in the Twin Cities, Pastor Charvez Russell, the leader of a historically Black congregation called Greater Friendship Missionary Baptist Church, emphasized the need for White evangelicals to become long-term partners in seeking systemic justice:

> We don't need saviors. What we need are partners. Yes, we need your help right now. Yes, we need your help cleaning up. Yes, we need your resources. But we also need long-term partners who are going to help us stand up for God and tear down the systems that hold people down.[168]

Russell's emphasis on the need for partnership with White evangelicals echoes critiques from Black scholars and clergy of a lack of participation by White evangelical churches in movements to oppose structural racism towards Black Americans.[169] During a June 1, 2020 news interview, W. Seth Martin, a Black pastor who leads a multiethnic congregation of about sixty worshipers called The Brook Community Church of Minneapolis, describes how he and other congregants attended protests to pray and have conversations. He argues that it is important for the public to see Christian leaders engaged in racial justice work:

> I want the culture to see a representative of Christ not just preaching about it, but also engaging in protests in a healthy way, in a way that's peaceful, in a way that

> reflects loving my neighbor well, and in a way that still says that this is wrong, and that God is grieved by this.[170]

This emphasis on social transformation via material intervention and engagement offers an alternative against which to contrast evangelical megachurch messages about race. Unsurprisingly, the sermons that I analyze retain the characteristic evangelical emphasis on a message of personal salvation. However, some also contain rhetorical statements critiquing the systemic aspects of racial oppression and advocating for meeting the material needs of marginalized communities. I read such statements as a positive step towards addressing evangelicalism's persistent whiteness and cultivating the type of engagement that Black clergy called for. Evangelical theology's biblical roots may be useful in such reformative work.

Arguments based on biblical texts have been used in the production of widely divergent race rhetorics, and evangelical theology contains resources that can and have been used to advocate for racial reform. Noll aptly states that biblical argumentation has produced "spectacular liberation alongside spectacular oppression" throughout American history.[171] There are numerous examples of this dichotomy. Abolitionist theologians rhetorically clashed with White supremacists over racist interpretations the book of Genesis.[172] Evangelical beliefs about punishment undergirded lynching, but other rhetors used biblical arguments to condemn it.[173] Later, evangelical theology was a profound influence on Martin Luther King, Jr. and other Civil Rights rhetorical leaders despite the fact that Southern evangelicals were among their staunchest opponents.[174] These "spectacular" divergences in theological race rhetoric accentuate the fact that evangelicals never *had* to arrive at racist interpretations of the Bible, but rather frequently *chose* to do so in pursuit of economic, social, or political advantage. The inventional resources found within biblical texts just as easily offer rhetors a means of advocating for "profoundly alternative social practices and radical social critiques."[175] The Bible's role in the production of

such divergent arguments indicates that its meaning within race rhetoric is primarily a product of the interpretive choices made by the rhetors who use theological argumentation to stamp biblical authority onto their own racial attitudes. I have chosen to analyze contemporary evangelical sermons because of the pivotal nature of the interpretive role that megachurch pastors play by guiding congregations numbering in the thousands in the process of applying the scripture that they hold to be the inerrant and authoritative word of God to racial justice issues. To further understand that role, the following paragraphs situate evangelical theological discourse within its contemporary megachurch context.

Megachurch Discourse and Race Relations

Today, evangelical megachurch rhetoric's emphases on expansion and appealing to seekers with individualistic experiences shape the relationships between megachurches and surrounding communities. Attendees encounter a personalized, "vaguely religious mall experience" that carries "weekday standards of dress and behavior into the church context" in what Edwards argues is an attempt to cater to the White suburbanites who constitute the majority of evangelical megachurch attendees.[176] Megachurches are quickly becoming the face of American Christianity. While many of the nation's smaller Christian congregations have closed amid a "precipitous decline" in attendance, nearly three-fourths of megachurches are growing in numbers.[177] When megachurches' attendance outgrows the capacity of their houses of worship, many turn to a multi-site model that commentators often compare to corporate mergers and acquisitions.[178] Suburban megachurches typically implement this model by approaching smaller churches, often urban and with shrinking congregations or retiring pastors, with an offer to purchase their facility and transform it into a "satellite campus" that streams sermons preached at the megachurch's existing main campus.[179] Around half of America's nearly 1,800

megachurches use this model amid ongoing debate over whether the system aligns with biblical teachings about church governance, is too vulnerable to leadership scandals and the vagaries of celebrity pastors, and produces separation from the local communities that churches wish to effectively reach.[180] The constitutive rhetoric that evangelical megachurches use to guide how congregants respond to social issues should therefore be of increasing interest to scholars, particularly given that rhetoric's social implications.

Contemporary evangelical megachurch rhetoric often attempts to project an appearance of neutrality regarding political and social issues that encourages congregants to engage while ignoring the consequences of that engagement. Where fundamentalists embraced separatism, evangelical megachurches typically implement a "friendlier and more cosmopolitan" approach to social engagement that enables them to "do both great good and great harm" while maintaining an appearance of "apparently nonpolitical openness."[181] Though Moral Majority-era sermons explicitly called congregants to action on political and social issues like abortion and same-sex marriage in order to "take back America" for God and thus forestall judgment day by "staying God's wrath," evangelical pastors have in recent years submerged those calls beneath rhetorical emphases on God's sovereign control over public life and inevitable social decline.[182] Martin describes this rhetoric as "active-passivism" and explains that it taps into pessimistic themes within premillennial eschatology by framing the world as "broken beyond repair."[183] This rhetoric implores evangelicals to focus on saving individual souls rather than wasting effort on reforming a condemned world. Attributing social decline to God's plan provides evangelicals with a warrant for ignoring the outcomes of their political and social behavior; congregants have only to stay the course and trust God with the results.[184] President Trump's racist and misogynistic rhetoric drew objections from a handful of prominent evangelicals, especially after

the circulation of the infamous *Access Hollywood* video, but his opposition to Roe v. Wade swayed single-issue and "values" voters who rejected Hillary Clinton's pro-choice position.[185] Martin argues that many evangelical pastors "stopped short of asking hard questions" about Trump and told their congregants to simply pray, vote as they wished, and not worry.[186] Eschatological pessimism equips evangelicals to attribute any undesirable consequences of their actions to God allowing the world to move closer to judgment day.

Evangelicalism's theological emphases, approach to political and social engagement, and history of reprehensible race rhetoric create rhetorical challenges for evangelical megachurch leaders attempting to navigate racial crises. A primary consideration for evangelical pastors is adhering to the inerrant and authoritative message of the Bible in the eyes of their congregations. In times of social upheaval and controversy, evangelical audiences are likely to seek out messages that provide reassurance in their existing interpretations of the Bible and the perspectives on social issues that they derive from those interpretations. At the same time, pastors must meaningfully address the emotional or spiritual needs created by an upsetting and chaotic exigence and appeal to potential converts among the wider public. Adhering to the theological expectations of congregants and navigating an established hierarchy of individualistic social and political values are especially significant hurdles for pastors seeking to use theological argumentation to challenge the racial status quo.

Furthermore, pastors of multi-site megachurches must also navigate differences in perspective and racial makeup among the congregations and neighborhoods of their suburban and urban campuses. Such differences are certainly a factor in the Twin Cities. The population of the City of Minneapolis is racially diverse; U.S. Census Bureau data reports that 62.7 percent of residents are White, 18.5% are Black or African American, 9.9% are Hispanic or Latino, and

5.2% are Asian.[187] As the case of Atlanta-based megachurch pastor Louis Giglio demonstrates, responses that attempt to rationalize or downplay evangelicalism's historical role in race-based oppression may result in public backlash that damages the reputation of the pastor or church and produces tension with surrounding communities.[188] However, evangelical pastors who speak about race issues or support protest movements such as Black Lives Matter also risk drawing accusations of having become too progressive or "woke" for their conservative-leaning congregations.[189] Such a pastor may face accusations of being swayed by secular social trends rather than adhering to the authoritative teachings of the inerrant scripture. Metaphors provide rhetors with a powerful tool for navigating rhetorical demands like these that arise from a group's ideological and doctrinal commitments, and evangelical megachurch rhetoric from the George Floyd moment provides a compelling opportunity to study metaphor in action. This opportunity is especially significant given that evangelical pastors have, in recent years, often preferred silence as a response to race issues.

A reticence to address race issues from the pulpit characterized evangelical pastoral rhetoric prior to the summer of 2020. Pew Research data from February of 2020 indicates that only thirty-nine percent of White evangelicals, in comparison to sixty-two percent of Black Protestants, considered it "essential" or "important, but not essential" that "topics such as race relations should be a priority for sermons."[190] However, a Barna Church Pulse poll conducted a few weeks after George Floyd's death found that ninety-four percent of U.S. pastors felt that churches have "a responsibility to denounce racism" and showed that sixty-two percent of pastors had made statements regarding Floyd.[191] This surge of pastoral interest in speaking about race raises the question of whether the pastors who spoke up followed in the footsteps of their predecessors by producing sermons offering auditors theological rationales for the racial status

quo or struck out in new directions by guiding auditors to become involved in advocating for racial reform. Attending to this type of discourse is particularly important in light of concerns about the relationship between the White Christian nationalist movement and evangelicalism that arose after the January 6th, 2021 riot at the nation's Capital.[192] That movement relies on rhetorics that construct evangelicals as victims, a theme that emerges in some of the sermons that I analyze.[193] The kind of evangelicalism that emerges from this period of racial reckoning could shape American race relations for years to come.

In light of these developments, my dissertation responds to Martin's call for "a new and more nuanced conversation" about the language of conservative evangelicals that might help them embrace more productive perspectives on race.[194] Critiquing metaphoric language that underpins problematic responses to calls for racial justice within evangelical theological discourse is a step towards bringing about that change, as is highlighting examples of evangelical theological argumentation that moves to bridge the gap between churches in the predominantly White religious movement and their racially marginalized neighbors. Where Martin uses a narrative approach to digital rhetorical ethnography to "decode" how evangelical sermons from churches across the country produce diffuse but consistent narratives that influence how evangelical congregants respond to a variety of political and social issues, my analysis uses a constitutive approach to metaphoric clusters to provide a concentrated analysis of sermons from a specific region, the Twin Cities, that dealt with the specific issues of George Floyd's murder and race relations.[195] Martin asks scholars to pursue a deeper understanding of evangelical discourse by setting aside "already well-known texts by already well-known speakers" to analyze sermons from pastors who "influence American evangelicalism writ large" from their pulpits each week.[196] Twin Cities megachurch sermons did not garner mass attention amid the national

discourse sparked by Floyd's murder, but they did contain theological arguments laden with metaphoric clusters that offered constitutive guidance to evangelical congregants and anyone else who would listen regarding how to respond to Floyd's death and ensuing calls for racial reform. I contribute to the inquiry that Martin calls for by identifying how metaphoric clusters and the space and mobility metaphors within them invite evangelical congregants to inhabit a variety of subjectivities ranging from antagonistic and apathetic to productively engaged in challenging the racial status quo.

In summary, this dissertation carries out a metaphoric criticism of Twin Cities megachurch sermons from the weeks after Floyd's murder to investigate how evangelical pastors broke their relative silence about race to address a crisis that laid bare the racial status quo's inadequacy. Evangelical theological argumentation has long exerted a pivotal and harmful influence on American race relations by advocating for the status quo. Today's evangelical theological discourse is also pivotal as it offers congregants constitutive guidance that shapes how predominantly White evangelical megachurch congregations relate to the racially diverse communities that they neighbor. The following chapters examine how clusters of metaphors, including space and mobility metaphors, play a crucial role within that theological discourse by mediating theology into guidance that shapes how evangelical congregants approach social issues. The surge in evangelical race rhetoric following George Floyd's death presents an opportunity to investigate the specific metaphoric language within evangelical theological discourse that constitutes racially significant subjectivities, including "lurking" theological arguments that configure members of racial minority groups as enemies of Christianity rather than neighbors, as more sinful than White congregants, or as burdens within the church. This study also provides an opportunity to consider how evangelical discourse might instead work to

constitute congregants as agents of meaningful change who take action to oppose systemic oppression and meet the needs of marginalized neighbors. Such rhetoric would be a productive step towards healing the divisions sustained by evangelicalism's whiteness. I have chosen sermons from evangelical megachurches in the Twin Cities region that addressed race in the weeks following George Floyd's murder as the texts for that analysis, including sermons preached by prominent senior or founding pastors heading Twin Cities megachurches, sermons from pastors in other meaningful but lower-ranking positions at those churches, and guest sermons provided by pastors in prominent positions at megachurches from other regions. Most of the sermons in these series were delivered by Black and White men, while one sermon was delivered by a Black woman.

Race Sermons at Twin Cities Megachurches

To study theological discourse that influences how evangelical megachurch congregations think about and respond to racial controversies, I have chosen to analyze sermon series delivered at evangelical megachurches in the Twin Cities that addressed the murder of George Floyd and race relations in America. This required determining which churches, pastors, or sermons to classify as evangelical. The ambiguous nature of evangelical identity complicates that process, but I am not the first rhetorical scholar to face that question. In an analysis of evangelical megachurch sermons about giving, Martin began with a list of megachurches maintained by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research and then used theological statements about biblical inerrancy from church websites to determine whether to classify them as evangelical.[197] Because of my emphasis on theological discourse, this approach is also suitable for my study. Starting from an updated version of the same list, I examined megachurch websites

for doctrinal statements or "statements of faith" that articulated theological positions aligning with Bebbington's quadrilateral. I used all four "corners" as criteria, but biblical inerrancy was the most common factor that distinguished evangelical churches from other congregations.

I have confined my analysis to megachurches. The Hartford Institute defines megachurches as churches with two thousand or more regular attendees, a number often relied upon by scholars and journalists.[198] Megachurches are largely an evangelical phenomenon; data from a 2020 Hartford Institute survey indicates that 65% of American megachurches self-identify as evangelical.[199] Because of their prominence in the evangelical landscape and the public eye, megachurches provide especially revealing examples of evangelical rhetorical leadership on race issues. Unlike denominational churches with hierarchical structures and creedal systems, evangelical megachurches follow what some commentators call a "CEO-type approach to church government" that is heavily dependent on pastoral leadership to dictate matters of doctrine and practice.[200] On a practical level, focusing on megachurches also narrowed the approximately 3,400 churches in the Twin Cities down to a more reasonable number of churches to consider for analysis.[201] Megachurches also typically possess the resources needed to stream or upload their sermons. This makes their rhetoric accessible to scholars. Martin's study of sermons about the 2008 financial crisis was limited by the small number of churches that posted their sermons online at the time, but the proliferation of streaming technology and the COVID-19 pandemic have since prompted an increase in online access to sermons.[202] I was able to access sermons from all eleven of the churches that met my initial criteria, but I chose to focus on the sermons that most clearly addressed issues related to race, the church, and the city.

I devote the three following chapters to analyzing sermon series delivered in three Twin Cities megachurches. I sought sermons that would contain a diverse range of relevant rhetorical statements to study. I also chose sermons from churches that addressed race and Floyd's death in June and July of 2020 rather than those that waited until later in the year. The questions of why some churches waited to address race and why some chose not to address race at all are compelling but lie beyond the scope of this project. I have chosen to focus on sermons delivered shortly after Floyd's murder to examine how rhetors faced the more immediate challenge of providing direction and reassurance to congregants as the crisis unfolded. Devoting each analytical chapter to a sermon series, a set of sequential sermons delivered by one or more pastors on a given topic or theme, enables a focused consideration of contextual factors relevant to each church such as its location within the Twin Cities, pastors and staff, history, doctrine, outreach programs, and racial justice work. While commenting on each church's pastoral staff, I give attention to their presentation of their racial identities. In addition to representing a religious perspective to auditors, preaching about race while inhabiting a body that has been constituted as raced also signifies a racial perspective to auditors.[203] Analyzing series rather than individual sermons limits the extent to which I can concentrate on any single sermon, and some sermons receive more attention in my analysis than others. However, this approach enables me to examine how metaphoric clusters developed over the course of multiple sermons preached to a given congregation and provides for a richer understanding of the subjectivities offered to that congregation in relation to race issues. One of the churches I chose for analysis, Substance Church, also invited prominent Black pastors leading megachurches in other regions as guest preachers. I include those sermons for analysis because they constitute a meaningful component of that church's racial messaging to congregants and other auditors.

Each selective choice limits the scope of a rhetorical study, but a narrow scope is productive when the purposes of rhetorical criticism are kept in mind. My goal is not to treat these sermons as representative samples of American evangelicalism as a whole or even of evangelicalism within the Twin Cities, though my analysis does shed light upon broader evangelical rhetorical trends. Each rhetorical act is particular and local, and each offers critics the opportunity to uncover "models for appreciation, insights for possible emulation, and instances of abuse for condemnation."[204] Each study is an opportunity to derive insights that equip rhetorical scholars to better understand the constitutive power of metaphors and the relationship between theological discourse and racial justice issues. I use the following chapter structure to achieve those aims.

Chapter Structure

The remainder of this dissertation consists of three case studies followed by a conclusion. Chapter 2 examines a series of five sermons produced by pastors at Substance Church, a multi-site, nondenominational, evangelical megachurch with locations in downtown Minneapolis and its northern suburbs. The first two sermons develop a cluster of metaphors based upon biblical narratives set in the space of Samaria. Metaphoric language in those sermons offers congregants a victimized but heroic subjectivity that sees the racially diverse residents of downtown Minneapolis as morally inferior Samaritans in need of a message of salvation from God.[205] The other three sermons use the biblical space of the battle of Jericho to characterize the crisis in the Twin Cities, prompting the congregation to view itself as a heroic military force invading urban Minneapolis.[206] In the theological context of biblical teachings, Samaria and Jericho are both spaces of racial and religious conflict. The sermon series' blend of militaristic and passive metaphors offers the congregation a subjectivity that takes comfort in the church's established

beliefs and spiritual practices. This subjectivity undermines the church's attempts to respond to the racial crisis with compassionate material intervention. In addition to demonstrating the value of metaphoric cluster criticism as an approach to reading the constitutive work performed within theological discourse, this analysis indicates that biblical spaces of racial conflict are fraught metaphoric vehicles for constructing subjectivities in the context of contemporary race relations. It also indicates how spatial metaphors within evangelical theological discourse sustain racist tropes associated with urban space.

In Chapter 3, I analyze a series of three sermons about race delivered at the main campus of Bethlehem Baptist Church, a multi-site evangelical megachurch headquartered in downtown Minneapolis. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of the church's geographic context, its pastors, and a subsequent period of racial controversy and leadership changes after which the church divided into three separate churches. On the Sundays following Floyd's death, three pastors at Bethlehem's then-main campus delivered sermons in a series on the theme of "When Suffering Is Great." The chapter examines how the clusters of metaphors in those sermons offer clashing subjectivities for congregants to inhabit in the midst of the racial crisis, thereby laying a constitutive groundwork for division in the church. The first sermon uses biblical metaphors to call congregants to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering and to contextualize the George Floyd crisis within an oppressive sense of time experienced by Black Americans throughout American history.[207] The second sermon draws upon the New Testament book of Hebrews to direct congregants to metaphorically "run the race" towards a post-racial vision of a heavenly future and instructs racial minority congregants to lay down the "burden" of "proving" their racial grievances to avoid hindering the White congregants with whom they are to "link arms" and "run."[208] The third sermon commends love for all amid racial disharmony, but it also

expands the concept of enemies drawn from the Gospel of Matthew and places burdens on victims of racial injustice.[209] I argue that the metaphor use in these sermons offers Bethlehem's congregation conflicted subjectivities to inhabit by commending both empathy and apathy towards racial divisions both within and outside of the church. The first sermon in the series contains messages about confronting structural racism, but the contradictory message sent by the other two sermons in the series hinders those efforts and lays a divisive constitutive foundation for the church's approach to race. The chapter concludes by discussing implications of those competing metaphors for the church's approach to racial justice in the Twin Cities.

Chapter 4 examines a series of sermons produced by clergy at Woodland Hills Church, a nondenominational, single-site, evangelical megachurch church located in St. Paul. After discussing the church's location, context, and pastoral staff, I analyze a series of sermons containing spatial metaphors that situate auditors in the Twin Cities within a cosmic spiritual battle between "the kingdom of God" and "the kingdom of this world." Language in these sermons also connects America's "original sin" of White supremacy to the fratricidal sin of Cain in Genesis, thereby linking White supremacy and structural racism to the biblical origins of murder.[210] Though it also employs warfare metaphors, this series constructs cosmic and systemic evil as the church's true enemy and invites the congregation to adopt the subjectivities of "kingdom people" and "antiracist peacemakers" who seize upon the "*kairos* moment" of the George Floyd crisis to win a decisive victory against evil by advocating from a posture of love and humility.[211] I discuss how, in the process of constructing a subjectivity that blends evangelical and antiracist commitments, these sermons attempt to balance affirmation of the church's existing spiritual practices with a call to greater engagement in social forms of material intervention against racial injustice. Analysis of these sermons demonstrates how metaphoric

shifts offer evangelical rhetors a powerful but fraught tool for challenging prevailing evangelical thought about race and inviting congregants to become agents of meaningful racial justice work.

Drawing upon the insights derived in my three case studies, Chapter 5 concludes by reflecting on the constitutive implications of spatial metaphors for each church and for race relations in the Twin Cities and beyond. I draw conclusions about how the crucial role that metaphors deployed within evangelical theological discourse play by mediating theology into divergent forms of guidance about how to respond to social issues like race. I also discuss metaphoric cluster criticism's value as a tool for scholars of evangelicalism and evangelical rhetoric for reading the constitutive work performed within theological discourse and articulate my dissertation's contribution to rhetorical literature on metaphor, race, space and mobility, and evangelical discourse.

Conclusion

Race remains a challenging issue for rhetors to address both on the broad scale of American public life and on the narrower scale of individual evangelical megachurches, their congregations, and their communities. In America's urban spaces, wherein Black mobilities are discursively marked as threatening or inappropriate, brutal acts of forced immobility deprive people like George Floyd of their lives. To borrow from Barney, "when the free movement of Black bodies runs up against the bullets of police gunfire," or becomes suffocatingly pinned under an officer's knee, "these bodies also collide against the structures of public discourse that censure honest discussion about the nature of mobility and space."[212] Such an "honest discussion" is needed to drill down into the ways that contemporary theological discourse contributes to an unjust status quo, particularly given the subtle ways in which rhetoric can

silence and marginalize.[213] Rhetorical critics are poised to produce deeper understandings of those discursive structures and highlight productive alternatives. The need to understand how rhetoric contributes to such deadly outcomes could not be more urgent.

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Chapter 2: On the Samaritan Road with Substance Church

Substance Church

Substance Church, a multi-site evangelical megachurch in the Twin Cities, was already holding online services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic when outrage over George Floyd's death and agitation by White supremacist groups spiraled into a chaotic weekend of arson and looting in downtown Minneapolis.[1] On May 31, 2020, Substance's approximately three-thousand members gathered virtually, likely expecting to hear guidance from their pastors about the chaotic exigence.[2] As the weeks unfolded, congregants heard a series of five messages that used the spaces of Samaria and Jericho as portrayed in biblical narratives as metaphors for the Twin Cities and for how they should view themselves as Christian congregants as they responded to the racial crisis in their community.

At the invitation of Peter Haas, Substance's Lead Pastor, two guest preachers provided digitally prerecorded sermons that were played for Substance's online services on May 31 and June 7. Jimmy Rollins is a Black pastor, author, and media figure who at the time led a predominantly Black congregation in Baltimore, Maryland.[3] Haas, who is White, describes Rollins as a "nationally known voice on the subject of race" and explains in an introduction to Rollins's May 31 guest sermon that he invited Rollins to produce a message about race for Substance because of the crisis.[4] Substance's second guest speaker is Tim Timberlake, a Black pastor who ministers at Jacksonville, Florida's Celebration Church. In the introduction to Timberlake's sermon, Haas explains that he invited Timberlake to speak out of a desire to see Substance "be a church that is a part of the solution," because of their close friendship, and because Timberlake "is so filled with the Spirit of God."[5] Rollins and Timberlake both used

metaphors based on biblical passages about Samaria to provide guidance to the congregation. Haas addressed the congregation on June 10, 14, and 21 with metaphors based upon biblical passages about Jericho. Because the rhetorical act of preaching is embodied, it involves the signification of racial perspectives as well as the articulation of religious ones.[6] Issues related to that signification are entailed in Haas's decision, as a White man and as Substance's Lead Pastor, to begin the church's series on race by stepping back from the pulpit and inviting guest sermons from prominent Black pastors leading megachurches in other parts of the country. This move could be read in a number of ways, including as an attempt to hide behind Black pastors or to deflect the risk of criticism associated with speaking about race issues that many White evangelicals consider too "divisive" for the pulpit.[7] His approach could also be read as an attempt to suggest that the congregation is already listening to the right voices regarding race issues. Such a reading might account for Haas's emphasis on Rollins's expertise regarding race relations and his statement about Timberlake being especially "filled with the Spirit of God." Though this spiritual language may be fitting to an evangelical context, Haas's description of Timberlake echoes rhetoric that ascribes special spiritual significance to Black people as a way of portraying them as non-threatening to White people.[8] The guest sermons also largely affirmed the church's existing approach to race issues, so Haas's move could be read as an effort to reassure the congregation that the crisis requires no change of direction from Substance as a church. These are just a few examples of how Rollins's, Timberlake's, and Haas's embodied rhetoric and positionality could be interpreted by auditors.

This case study examines the five aforementioned sermons from the constitutive and metaphoric perspective articulated in the previous chapter, giving particular attention to spatial metaphors and the metaphoric clusters surrounding them. I argue that although these sermons ask

congregants to take action to address racial injustice, those calls are undercut by metaphors performing constitutive work that offers an expedient but apathetic subjectivity for the congregation to inhabit as they respond to the racial crisis and interact with the racially diverse communities surrounding their church. A metaphoric cluster built around the spatial metaphor of the Twin Cities as Samaria frames racial justice work as secondary to the church's evangelical imperative, constructs Jesus as a conqueror and the congregation as victims, and describes the church's role in racial justice work using static metaphoric imagery. A metaphoric cluster that uses Jericho to characterize the crisis in the Twin Cities casts the church's outreach work as an invasive campaign undertaken by a suburban church into an urban community. Reading these metaphors critically against evangelical theological discourse's historical support for the racial status quo, I argue that these sermons reveal how the clusters of metaphors used within theological discourse perform racially-significant constitutive work that shapes how audiences respond to race issues.

I begin with a brief discussion of Substance's history and location in the Twin Cities. As a multi-site megachurch that established itself in the suburbs and then expanded into downtown Minneapolis, Substance faces the rhetorical complexities of navigating racial issues as a multi-site church. I next provide theological context regarding Samaria, a biblical space of racial tension that serves as the vehicle for metaphoric clusters in Rollins's and Timberlake's sermon. Next, I analyze those metaphoric clusters and the subjectivities that they offer to Substance. I then follow a similar process by providing theological context regarding the biblical space of Jericho and analyzing the constitutive work performed by the clusters of metaphors within Haas's sermon. In each analysis, I consider how pastors use metaphors to mediate theology into guidance for congregants navigating the racial crisis. I argue that despite surface-level messages

about racial solidarity and love for others, the metaphoric clusters used in these sermons perform constitutive work that invites culture war antagonisms between church and community and also encourages active-passivist responses to questions of racial justice. The sermons invite congregants to take assurance that their existing spiritual practices are the best means of responding to the racial crisis. By using metaphoric cluster criticism to look at the constitutive work operating beneath the surface of these messages, I uncover lurking theological arguments that configure members of the racially diverse communities of the Twin Cities as moral inferiors. This chapter concludes by discussing the implications of this rhetoric for Substance's relationship to the Twin Cities, for evangelical race relations as a whole, and for rhetorical scholarship's understanding of the constitutive work performed by spatial metaphors.

Expansion at Substance

Substance's growth follows trends common to evangelical megachurches. An "Our Story" page on the church's website narrates how strategic use of a satellite campus model and divine intervention enabled the church to multiply rapidly and establish permanent locations first in the suburbs and later in downtown Minneapolis. The website describes how a group of small gatherings held on the University of Minnesota campus in 2004 grew into a group large enough to lease a high school building in the northern Twin Cities suburb of Fridley in 2009 and then into a multi-site megachurch using video technology to provide services to three-thousand members at seven locations as of 2011.[9] Lead Pastor Peter Haas, who co-leads Substance with wife Carolyn Haas, narrates a story in which God miraculously used a dream to guide his daughter to seek out a building with a large balcony in the metropolitan area to address the church's need for a new permanent space. This led Peter to pursue the purchase of the historic

Wesley building, one of the oldest church locations in downtown Minneapolis, in 2016. The "Our Story" narrative concludes by anticipating future miracles and describing a divine mandate to "change Christianity in the Twin Cities and beyond."[10] Substance operates out of four permanent locations as of this writing: the Westside Campus in the western suburb of Maple Grove, a Northtown Campus in the northern suburb of Spring Lake Park, a Downtown Campus in urban Minneapolis, and an international sister church in Monterrey, Mexico.[11]

An emphasis on the strategic pursuit of church growth is reflected in the church's descriptions of itself. On the church website, Haas says that he founded Substance because "Christianity in the Midwest was dying on my watch" and, seeing the Twin Cities as an "epicenter of education" in the region, he wanted to form a church that would strategically reach the large numbers of young adults in the region.[12] In a "Q&A" document on the church's website, he argues that Christians "need to stop the shrinkage of the American church" and that this is the primary way to address "the pains of poverty, sex trafficking, abuse, adultery, divorce, and prayerlessness" in society.[13] News reports about Substance's growth attribute its popularity to the church's contemporary style of preaching and music, features like indoor playgrounds and coffee shops, and live DJ music.[14] These features align with what Edwards calls the "vaguely religious mall experience" that megachurches use to appeal to White suburbanites.[15] Substance has also set its sights on reaching urban Minneapolis.

Since acquiring its downtown location, Substance has launched initiatives designed to reach the surrounding community. This includes the "Manna Market," a food pantry ministry that accepts donations from local grocers of items at risk of going to waste, repackages them at Substance's Northtown campus, and distributes them out of trucks at Substance's downtown Minneapolis campus once a week.[16] Substance offers seeker-friendly church services aimed at

appealing to community members. The web page for the Downtown Campus invites any who are interested to "come just as you are" to "grab a cup of coffee on your way in, enjoy a few songs of worship and an encouraging message from Pastor Peter," and join pastors in the lobby for a Q&A session.[17] This rhetoric indicates an effort to use the same type of experience offered at Substance's suburban campuses to connect with community members in the downtown area.

Because of the church's efforts to reach the racially diverse city of Minneapolis and the proximity of its downtown location to the unrest that followed Floyd's murder, Substance's leaders have faced the rhetorical challenges of a suburban megachurch attempting to make in-roads with an urban community. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, evangelical megachurch pastors who lead multi-site churches in racially diverse urban regions must navigate a variety of rhetorical challenges during a racial crisis including adhering to the inerrant message of the Bible in the eyes of the congregation, addressing the emotional or spiritual needs created by the crisis, navigating an existing hierarchy of evangelical political and social values that lean conservative and individualistic, and appealing to potential converts among the public. Substance's Downtown campus is located just three miles from where George Floyd was killed and was damaged in the unrest that followed.[18] The sermons that I analyze in this chapter offer a look into how Substance broke evangelicalism's relative silence about racial injustice and spoke to those issues from the epicenter of the racial unrest. Before proceeding with my analysis of Rollins's and Timberlake's Samaria sermons, I provide some historical and theological context regarding the biblical space that serves as a metaphor within them. A comprehensive theological review of each passage is beyond the scope of this work, but a brief survey of how evangelicals typically interpret that space and the characters within it provides helpful context for my reading of Substance's theological argumentation.

Racial Conflict and Promiscuity in Biblical Samaria

A grasp of the meanings that evangelicals typically associate with biblical Samaria provides a backdrop for understanding the metaphoric meanings conveyed to congregants in the sermons at hand. Because textual theology reflects theological traditions in addition to the rhetor's own theological views, a brief survey of the meanings that evangelicals traditionally associate with this biblical space sheds light on how auditors may interpret the meanings of those spaces as presented within the sermons at hand.[19] Two categories of meaning are most relevant to this analysis. First, evangelicals commonly interpret Samaria as a space of racial and religious conflict. Next, evangelicals commonly understand that space to be inhabited by promiscuous figures. This section examines those meanings.

Samaria in Evangelical Discourse

Both of Substance's guest preachers base their sermons on Bible passages pertaining to Samaria. Jimmy Rollins's May 31 message focuses on John 4 in which Jesus travels through Samaria and encounters a Samaritan woman often referred to as the "woman at the well," while Tim Timberlake's June 7 message deals with the Luke 10 passage in which Jesus responds to a question from a young lawyer about the duty to love one's neighbor by telling the "parable of the Good Samaritan."[20] The ancient town of Samaria, located in central Palestine, was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel for a time.[21] Later conquests by other nations led to intermarriage and a mingling of pagan idol worship with Israelite religion.[22] This led most Jews of Christ's day to consider Samaritans undesirable both ethnically and religiously.

Perhaps the best-known parable from Christ, the parable of the Good Samaritan is a topic of widespread interest such that the notion of being a "Good Samaritan" is synonymous with rendering aid to a stranger in crisis. Luke 10 records the parable as Christ's retort to a scholar of

the Mosaic Law who questions Christ's interpretation of the command to "love your neighbor."[23] Christ responds with a parable in which a Jewish man who is traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho, a path that would take him through Samaria, is attacked by robbers and left on the wayside. Two religious authority figures pass the wounded man and ignore his needs. Despite the tension between their peoples, a Samaritan rescues the Jewish traveler and pays for his care at an inn. The passage concludes with Christ asking the scholar which of the three travelers acted as the victim's neighbor and imploring his listeners to imitate the Samaritan. In rhetorical scholarship, Kirkwood highlights the shift in "mode of discourse" that occurs in the passage as it moves from an explicit question-and-answer format to a narrative format and then back.[24] Kirkwood argues that Christ's use of parable is "highly personal and makes no pretense of detached, impersonal discussion," thereby subverting the lawyer's analytical question and challenging the premise that "rational, legalistic analysis is the ultimate solution to the problem posed by the demand that humans be compassionate."[25] A full survey of academic literature regarding the parable is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but a few typical interpretations of the parable are worth briefly noting.

A survey of evangelical Bible resources reveals that evangelical thinkers and preachers commonly interpret the parable as a call to set aside personal comforts to care for the wellbeing of others. LifeWay, the media nonprofit operated by the Southern Baptist Convention, presents awkward encounters with neighbors as the modern-day equivalent of the Samaritan's encounter with the injured man and implores Christians to "be attentive to the presence of God and the people around you" and "run the awkward risk of looking people in the eyes and asking how they're doing."[26] This represents a typical, if low-stakes, evangelical interpretation of the text's message of care for others. In contrast to the personal emphasis of evangelical interpretations,

Social Gospel messages invite Christians to "to be their 'brother's keeper' and, like the Good Samaritan, to succor all those who have been waylaid on the journey of life."[27] Another common interpretation views the parable as a metaphor for Christ's atonement, using the injured man to represent mankind's fallen nature, the robbers to represent Satan, and the Samaritan to represent Christ's message of salvation. However, one commentary points out that this interpretation "draws attention to Jesus that does not appear to be intended in the text" and concludes that the parable is a best interpreted as a straightforward call to imitate the Good Samaritan's compassion by setting aside prejudice and practicing compassion.[28] Timberlake's metaphoric interpretation of this parable aligns most closely with the last of these interpretations, but it does so with an unconventional twist. Though he uses the Good Samaritan as a picture of Christ's sacrifice, he also invites congregants to view themselves both as beaten victims and as "innkeepers" within the "Samaria" of the Twin Cities.

John 4 describes Jesus's encounter with a Samaritan woman drawing water from a well as he rests during a journey through Samaria. Christ offers her "living water" and speaks about a coming time when the religious divisions between Jews and Samaritans will no longer be important because followers of God will worship together "in the Spirit and in truth."[29] Christ also comments on the woman's five previous marriages and current relationship with a sixth man. Expressing shock at his apparently miraculous knowledge of her personal life, the woman accepts Christ's message and evangelizes to her community. Evangelicals commonly interpret this passage as a message about the importance of sharing the "living water" of the gospel message despite racial and religious differences because "all people are valuable to God" and because "Jesus desires that we demonstrate love to everyone . . . including even our enemies."[30]

The passage's emphasis on the Samaritan woman's previous relationships is a point of contention. While appreciated for her spiritual interest in Jesus, her conversion, and her testimony to others, the woman at the well is also strongly associated with promiscuity within evangelical discourse. Evangelical commentaries on John 4 note that in addition to being despised within the wider Jewish culture because of racial and religious differences, the woman would have been further "ostracized and marked as immoral" within her own community as an "unmarried woman living openly with the sixth in a series of men."[31] This interpretation of the passage is a topic of dispute, however, and scholars have argued that the woman's marital history could have been the result of loss, abuse, or cultural customs rather than promiscuity. Reeder notes that despite the fact that the woman at the well is an early apostle who "does the work of God," theologians and preachers have since the third century advanced the assumption that she was either a prostitute or an adulterer despite the passage's otherwise positive portrayal of her "intelligence and apostolic zeal."[32] Discussing the passage within the context of the #MeToo movement, Parker critiques commentators who have paid "unwanted sexual attention" to her marital history rather than emphasizing her evangelical witness to others and argues that this interpretive approach to biblical women sustains the "Jezebel" trope, which associates promiscuity with Black women.[33] Forged in the antebellum South as racist cover for sexual relations between enslaver and enslaved, the Jezebel trope ascribes "aggressive sexuality and licentiousness" to Black women and frames them as vulgar temptresses of White men.[34] As I mentioned in Chapter 1, similar discursive associations between urban space and Black skin stigmatize Black people as chaotic figures such as the dangerous "Black male criminal" and the promiscuous "welfare queen."[35] Despite the existence of hermeneutic alternatives, a negative association between the racially-othered Samaritan woman and promiscuity nevertheless remains

common among evangelicals. Rollins also interprets this woman as promiscuous, a decision that has implications for his sermon's metaphoric portrayal of residents of the Twin Cities.

Metaphoric Clusters in Substance's Race Rhetoric

In Chapter 1, I outlined metaphoric cluster criticism as a method for reading the constitutive work performed by rhetorical texts and described the pivotal role of metaphors in constructing social reality, defining intergroup relations, offering competing interpretations of established social orders, and enabling rhetors to navigate the conceptual boundaries of groups with doctrinal commitments. I also unpacked the constitutive role of spatial language in defining the social realities of race and shaping the possibilities of mobility for marginalized groups. Here I put that framework into action by examining the constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors and the space and mobility metaphors within them in race sermons delivered at Substance. Mindful that rhetorics that denigrate people with racial minority identities and rationalize a harmful racial status quo may lurk beneath the surface of positive-sounding messages of racial unity, I look beyond the persuasive work in these sermons to consider the constitutive work that lies beneath as the sermons offer auditors guidance regarding how to interpret and respond to the racial crisis. I begin with the two sermons that used biblical portrayals of Samaria to construct clusters of metaphors with racial implications.

Clusters of metaphors based on the biblical space of Samaria perform significant constitutive work in the sermons preached to Substance's congregation in the days following George Floyd's death. This section focuses on those spatial metaphors and the clusters of metaphors that surround them as they developed first in Jimmy Rollins's sermon and then in Tim Timberlake's sermon. I argue that these sermons offer congregants appealingly heroic but

socially disengaged subjectivities as guidance for responding to the racial crisis. Despite a palatable veneer of racial reconciliation language that asks congregants to respond to the crisis with love for others across cultural and racial divisions, the constitutive work performed by the metaphoric clusters in these sermons ultimately invites Substance's congregation to inhabit subjectivities in which they are victims and members of the surrounding community are moral inferiors.

Metaphors in Rollins's Sermon

Jimmy Rollins speaks to Substance during online services on May 31 via a pre-recorded video sermon. Rollins preaches on the fourth chapter of the New Testament book of John in a sermon entitled "There is Destiny in the Detour." After reading verses three through ten, he preaches on four alliterative main points consisting of "take a different direction," "discover the deficit," "dominate diversity," and "dig a little deeper." The sermon asks Substance's congregants to take a "detour" by going into "areas in our cities that we've been avoiding" and "that are not our preferences" to "do life with people that we wouldn't do life with."[36] He critiques the evangelical habit of "only making disciples of people that are close to us" and asks Substance to "be the tangible hands and feet [of God] to different cultures" by setting aside the notion of making "points" and picking up "the agenda to make a difference."[37] Rollins also tells congregants that he experiences a "different reality" as an African American father who has difficult conversations with his children about how to interact safely with the police. He also emphasizes how he and Substance's White pastors are "brothers and sisters in Christ" despite their racial differences.[38]

Twin Cities as Samaria

Rollins uses Samaria as a metaphor for "this season of doing this COVID craziness and

doing the racial tension in our country."[39] He argues that because "Jesus says we have to go through Samaria," Christians must similarly confront the "racial divide."[40] Using Christ's journey as a metaphor for navigating the racial crisis, he tells auditors that "God can do something amazing if we stop avoiding Samaria" and can "use this conversation to bring healing to African Americans, to White people, to Asian people, to Hispanic people, whoever it is."[41] Rollins expands his Samaria metaphor by comparing the racial tension in John 4 to the racial tensions in the Twin Cities. He calls the passage "racially charged" and draws parallels between the tensions between Jews and Samaritans over religious practices and contemporary racial tensions: "you Jews worship this way. You Samaritans do it this way. You Jews do it this way. You Hispanic people do it this way. You White people do it this way. You African American people do it this way."[42] He adds that churches need to be "dynamically diverse" because "we live in a dynamically diverse city."[43] Though Rollins maintains an emphasis on his congregants' role as residents of the Twin Cities, his metaphor still invites a degree of detachment by prompting congregants to understand their place within the Twin Cities through the heroic role of the sojourning Christ. As each sermon proceeds, additional metaphors build upon this initial positioning of congregants as travelers in a hostile land.

Rollins uses a metaphor of "detour" to describe Jesus's journey into Samaria and the metaphoric journey that he asks Substance's congregants to take into the Twin Cities. Because Christ "went through Samaria," Rollins says, congregants need to "go through areas in our cities that we've been avoiding."[44] From the outset, the metaphor of detour frames attempts to reach across racial divisions as an unwanted side trip or delay, an immobilizing hindrance to the evangelical church's mission. Rollins expounds upon the nature of this detour by alluding to New Testament narratives of Jesus' interactions with sinful people, saying that "Jesus sat with

people who he wasn't supposed to do life with. Jesus ministered to the woman at the well. Jesus ministered to a sinful woman. Jesus. Come on, somebody! He wrote in the dirt."[45] The biblical allusions in this statement imply that the detour Rollins is asking Substance's congregants to take involves imitating Christ by reaching out to people who are undesirable. The references to a "sinful woman" and to writing in the dirt allude to John 8 in which Pharisees drag a woman who is described as being caught in the act of adultery to Jesus, who responds by writing in the dirt and inviting anyone who is without sin to cast the first stone.[46] Rollins's language conflates the adulterous "sinful woman" character and the "woman at the well" character in a manner that perpetuates the notion that the latter was promiscuous. By emphasizing the promiscuity of these figures and using them as metaphoric representations of the residents of the areas of the Twin Cities that Substance's predominantly-White congregants might typically avoid, Rollins provides theological support for a "moral economy of place" that stereotypes urban spaces and their inhabitants as immoral.[47] By imploring congregants to reach out to those residents, he offers them a heroic, Christlike subjectivity in which they have an important role to play in the rescue of sinners in need of salvation and moral reform. His call to action is, however, predicated on a cluster of metaphors that configures those residents as abject moral inferiors, and the language of detour suggests that this work is ultimately secondary to the auditor's own spiritual journey.

Conquest and Infiltration

Rollins also uses metaphors of violence that call for the conquest of racial diversity through the spreading of the gospel message and position the congregation as an invasive force. Rollins presents his call for racial unity through a metaphor of domination, imploring his audience to "dominate diversity" a total of ten times throughout the sermon. The first time that

he uses this wording, which may have been chosen because it fits with the alliteration of his main points, he also explicitly frames the story of the woman at the well in racial terms:

> We have to dominate diversity. We have to dominate diversity. Listen to this. It says, 'you Jews worship this way.' Look at John four, nine to eleven. 'The woman was surprised for Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, you are a Jew and I am a Samaritan.' Why are we talking? You are White and I am Black. Why are we living in the same neighborhood? Why are we going to the same church? You're Hispanic and you're Asian. Why are we in this thing together? Why, why, why, why, why, why, why? Because God has called us to dominate diversity. Yeah, we're going to be a dynamically diverse church.[48]

Asking "what can unify us?" he specifies that the "gospel message of Jesus Christ" is the means of dominating racial diversity and becoming a racially diverse church.[49] Rollins also uses the image of a "stronghold" as a metaphor for racism; Rollins argues that Christ's love is needed to "break the stronghold of racism, the stronghold of prejudiced thinking, the stronghold of hate."[50] Rollins also specifically uses the Samaritan woman as an example of what domination looks like, stating that the "detour nature of Jesus was infiltrated on the inside of this woman where she took her God experience" and "began to share it with everybody in her city."[51] Though the wording here is awkward, it presents the Samaritan woman's conversion to belief in Christ as the result of a nonconsensual act of infiltration perpetrated by Christ against her. Rollins's use of the language of infiltration and domination to describe Christ's conversion of this racially-othered woman frames Substance's efforts to reach the racially diverse population of Minneapolis as a campaign of conquest that will ultimately bring about unity by bringing people into a racially diverse church. If racial tensions persist in the Twin Cities, it will be because members of the community fail to follow the example of the Samaritan woman and her city by yielding to the diversity-dominating message of Christ. A kingdom metaphor bolsters this theme.

Kingdom Rule

Rollins further reinforces the theme of conquest with a kingdom metaphor. He tells congregants that their "ethnic culture" becomes subordinated to a Christian "kingdom culture" upon conversion to Christianity:

> Do you know that when you became a Christian, that your ethnic culture became a subculture to the kingdom culture? Oh, let me say that again. Yes. When you gave your life to Christ, you became a citizen. Not just of the United States of America. You became a citizen of heaven.[52]

The term "kingdom culture" alludes to the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" that appear frequently throughout the New Testament.[53] That language conveys the notion that God rules "over all the universe" as well as "over the hearts and lives of those who willingly submit to God's authority," but it also has eschatological connotations within an evangelical context pertaining to the concept of Christ literally ruling on the earth during a "millennium" kingdom predicted in prophetic texts.[54] This metaphor suggests that the persistence of racial tension in the community is ultimately the result of the people's decision to cling to ethnic and civic identities that keep them on the outside of the church rather than embracing an offer of heavenly citizenship and coming into the unity of the church by submitting to God's inevitable rule.

A larger pattern of meaning emerges when reading this language alongside Rollins's configuration of the Samaritan woman as an immoral character and target of conquest. His metaphor use ultimately invites congregants to view community members as sinfully clinging to a conflict-sustaining set of ethnic and civic identities that must be infiltrated by and subordinated to the "kingdom culture" of evangelicalism. Rollins's metaphor use invites Substance's congregation to adopt an antagonistic view of their

surrounding community by framing the racial crisis in the Twin Cities as a conflict between the immoral inhabitants of "Samaria" and a foreign army tasked with spreading kingdom culture. The "true" conflict in this metaphoric formation is not between Black and White, but rather between congregants and outsiders who opt for secular disunity rather than Christian unity. Rather than inviting congregants to take to the streets to spread this message, however, Rollins offers congregants a more expedient subjectivity.

Static Metaphors

A cluster of metaphors of immobility in Rollins's sermon offers the congregation a passive subjectivity that views the evangelical offer of conversion as the only solution needed for the racial crisis. Evoking the scene at the well in the John 4 narrative, Rollins states that God wants Substance to act as a well for those affected by the racial crisis:

> You see, when you go through Samaria, there's always a well that is life giving in the midst of a season which seems life-threatening or life-taking. I believe that God is calling Substance Church to be the well in Minneapolis for all sorts of people; that people could come to this well called Substance Church and meet Jesus and meet the Savior, because Jesus wants to quench the deficits that are in communities.[55]

Though this water metaphor suggests that Substance should meet the needs of a suffering community, the image of a well implies a static approach to that outreach. Envisioning the church as a well suggests that congregants should not move towards community members to offer aid, but rather remain stationary and give aid to those who, like the woman at the well, come to satisfy their thirst. Additionally, the type of help Rollins invites congregants to offer is not material intervention or social engagement, but rather a panacea of faith to "quench" whatever "deficits" exist. Like his infiltration metaphor, this language also suggests that whatever trouble the community is experiencing is ultimately the result of its own deficiency:

namely, a lack of faith. As a whole, this metaphoric language invites the congregation to inhabit a static and inwardly-focused subjectivity that, in combination with language framing the "journey" of race relations as an undesirable detour, may dissuade congregants from offering any form of help aside from an opportunity to convert. For now, I move into an examination of Timberlake's sermon. Speaking one week after Rollins, Timberlake also invites the congregation to view the Twin Cities through the lens of Samaria.

Metaphors in Timberlake's Sermon

Tim Timberlake speaks to Substance's congregation during a June 7 online service via a pre-recorded video sermon entitled "The Keepers." After reading Luke 10:25-35, Timberlake addresses the "layers and layers and layers of pain" caused by COVID-19 and racial tension with a message calling "the church of Jesus Christ to be the keepers for our brothers and our sisters, to protect and uphold and to set the standard for what love really looks like."[56] Timberlake's main points ask the congregation to avoid limiting "love to likeness," to recognize that Jesus is the solution to "chaos and calamity," and to take up the role of "innkeepers" who "protect those who need protecting."[57] Timberlake concludes without reading or speaking about the concluding portion of the passage in which Christ commends imitation of the Good Samaritan to the young lawyer. Instead, he advances a metaphoric interpretation of the parable that casts Christ as the Good Samaritan and aligns the congregation with the roles of both victim and innkeeper.

Timberlake's Samaria Metaphors

Like Rollins, Timberlake also addresses the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and racial tension and invites auditors to view themselves through the metaphoric lens of travelers journeying through Samaria. Timberlake mentions the double exigence and comments that Substance is "ground zero for this racial tension that's going on right now in society."[58] The term

"ground zero" frames the racial tension as an immediate threat to congregants, similar to how the ground zero of a viral outbreak is a space of immediate threat. Later in the sermon, he asks Substance's congregation to see themselves as the traveler in the Good Samaritan parable, stating that in the midst of "this season" there is "a traveler in this story, and that traveler is you, and that traveler is me."[59] In addition to establishing a foundation for metaphors used in the remainder of the sermon, casting the congregations as travelers within their own local community invites them to view themselves as detached from other community members. Their neighbors are not neighbors at all but rather residents of a foreign land.

Timberlake's sermon further invites congregants to embrace a detached subjectivity in relation to the racial crisis by advancing an interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan that treats it as an individually-focused metaphor for Christ's atonement rather as a socially-focused call to imitate the merciful actions of the Good Samaritan. Unlike the heroic subjectivity that Rollins offers to congregants, Timberlake begins his call to salvation with a metaphor that initially positions auditors as the victims in the parable. Explaining that the traveler in the story was robbed, beaten, stripped, and left "half dead," Timberlake tells auditors that they may likewise "feel half dead."[60] Regarding the source of this victimization, Timberlake refers to the "unbelievably tense season" of racial tension in society as an "unseen giant" that auditors are fighting against.[61] By casting his listeners as the beaten traveler rather than the Good Samaritan, Timberlake positions them as victims in the context of the racial crisis rather than as agents who, like the Good Samaritan, might provide aid to others who are suffering. Timberlake's personification of the racial crisis as an "invisible giant" further bolsters his sermon's treatment of the crisis as a threat that congregants have little ability to resolve. Having positioned auditors as victims, Timberlake offers them a path to personal salvation.

Timberlake interprets the Samaritan as a metaphor for Christ's atonement. He explains that just as the Samaritan "came down off his animal" and "exchanged places" with the victim, "Jesus came down, he went to the cross, and he exchanged places with us."[62] This metaphoric interpretation of the passage presents it as an individualistic message of personal victimhood and spiritual salvation rather than a social message of love for the racial or religious other. In an indirect sense, casting Christ as the Good Samaritan may invite auditors to imitate the Samaritan's charitable deeds within an evangelical context; congregants are likely familiar with teachings based on passages like Ephesians 5:1-2 that command Christians to imitate Christ's example of love.[63] That, however, requires auditors to make an additional interpretive leap rather than following Timberlake's direct guidance to identify with the victim in the parable. Timberlake's reading of scripture further emphasizes the role of victim for his auditors.

Congregants as True Victims

Timberlake's treatment of the framing portion of scripture surrounding the parable further supports his metaphoric configuration of Substance congregants as the true victims of the racial crisis. Discussing the opening portion of the text in which the lawyer questions Jesus, Timberlake states that Jesus is "painting a picture for this man who is asking him for eternal life," someone "who has done good things and is trying to live up to the standard of the law."[64] This language suggests a division that is important throughout the sermon between secular people who are fruitlessly doing their best to live just lives in the eyes of society, and Christians who find justification through their faith. Timberlake's reading of the passage in Luke 10 ends at verse 35, which omits the final portion of the text where Jesus explicitly commands the scholar who questioned him to imitate the example of the Good Samaritan. In verses 36 and 37, Jesus asks the scholar which of the bystanders acted as a neighbor to the victim, and lawyer replies that

it was the one who helped him. Jesus replies, "go and do likewise."[65] By omitting Christ's interpretation of the parable as a call to neighborly love, Timberlake further facilitates his own interpretation of the passage as a metaphor for personal salvation. Concluding his sermon with a virtual "altar call," Timberlake implores his listeners to accept Jesus as the solution to their problems so they can then "give people the solution of Jesus for whatever problem they may be up against."[66] These rhetorical choices reinforce an evangelical hierarchy of values that presents social issues as the result of unmet individual spiritual needs. By implication, the suffering and chaos in the city are the results of sin or absent faith in the lives of the individuals involved, and congregants can safely ignore the social or structural issues undergirding the racial crisis as long as they offer personal salvation as the ultimate curative. Timberlake also invites congregants to inhabit a role that is ostensibly protective but ultimately disengaged.

Unscrupulous Innkeepers

In addition to prompting his auditors to identify with the victim, Timberlake also asks auditors to inhabit a role based on the innkeeper mentioned in the parable. In the biblical passage, the Good Samaritan takes the beaten traveler to an inn, pays the innkeeper for the man's care, and promises to return later to cover any additional expenses incurred in that care.[67] Timberlake begins establishing this role by telling Substance that "we have a great opportunity as the church of Jesus Christ to be the keepers for our brothers and our sisters to protect and uphold and to set the standard for what love really looks like."[68] He later uses a description of historical inns as a parallel to the church's present-day responsibilities, saying that "inns were created to protect people. The church is created to protect people."[69] He also charges Substance with a "mandate" to "protect those who are half dead" and those who "don't have a voice to

speak up for themselves" by acting as "the innkeepers to protect those that need protecting."[70] This protective role shifts as the sermon unfolds.

Timberlake later shifts this metaphor in a way that shifts the role and responsibilities that it ascribes to the congregation. He says that "innkeepers were known throughout the Bible to take stuff from people's quarters and to overcharge people based upon the season that they were in and based upon what was going on. They were not historically good people."[71] The innkeeper's motivations are not specified in the parable, but Timberlake interprets the innkeeper as a mercenary figure whose only motivation for caring for the victim is the Good Samaritan's promise of additional payment. This new wrinkle in the metaphor suggests something about the agency of the auditors who have been invited to imitate this role: even if they attempt to act as "keepers" by addressing the racial crisis, their human flaws means that the work is ultimately best left to Christ. Timberlake goes on to explain that despite the innkeeper's lack of scruples, the Samaritan ultimately assures that the victim is cared for:

> But yet, still this Samaritan took this wounded man to this inn. And he encouraged the innkeeper: 'do whatever you need to do, and I will come back.' And this is what Jesus wants you to know right now: no matter what's going on in your life, no matter how bad it may look, no matter how bad it may seem, he wants you to know that he is going to come back and he is going to do and be all that you need him to do and be.[72]

This language's emphasis on Christ returning to be what *you* need him to be shifts auditors back into the role of victim. Jesus, like the Samaritan, will return and see that all victims are cared for. Thus, the church's duty of care as innkeepers does not ultimately rest on their imperfect shoulders, but rather on the perfect shoulders of Christ. This metaphor offers congregants an out, a rationale for avoiding involvement in the suffering around them. With Christ in the role of Good Samaritan and congregants in the dual role of helpless victim and flawed innkeeper, this

cluster of metaphors forms a structure of meaning in which Christ's divine intervention is the only worthwhile solution that the congregation should even attempt to offer to their community. Static metaphors further reinforce the passive and inwardly-focused nature of that subjectivity.

Static Metaphors

Timberlake uses a metaphor of radiance that prescribes a similarly static role for auditors. He tells the congregation to allow their love "to radiate like never before" so that people can then "encounter the love of Jesus Christ."[73] Describing what that radiance means, he instructs auditors to focus on "what *we* need" so that "the love of Jesus Christ" will "radiate throughout that city."[74] If congregants do this, he argues that love will "radiate" from out of the church and "out of your homes" and go "out into the communities and out into the streets."[75] This language invites auditors to concentrate on the needs of the community only after meeting the needs of church and family, suggesting an indirect form of causality by which the church's inward focus will function as a metaphoric light source that passively "radiates" love into the community. Consequently, this static metaphor invites auditors to adopt a passive subjectivity in relation to the racial crisis and the suffering around them. A nature metaphor serves a similar function.

Alluding to nature documentaries, Timberlake encourages his auditors to imitate hummingbirds rather than vultures. He explains how the "hummingbird always looks for sweet nectar," which means seeking out "things that are alive," and he argues that congregants who "search out the dead things" like vultures will fail to grasp the "tools" that God gives them to "stand in the face of injustice" in the current period of racial tensions.[76] He subsequently characterizes searching out the "dead things" as dwelling on the "chaos and calamity" happening in the world and encourages congregants to search for a relationship with Jesus instead.[77] This prohibition against searching out "dead things" invites auditors to ignore tragic or upsetting

aspects of the racial crisis such as the brutality and social conditions that sparked it. To become engaged with the civic exigence and in secular reform work would be to imitate the crass vulture by turning away from the "sweet nectar" of the church's spiritual practices and beliefs. This metaphor further contributes to a subjectivity that looks inward and seeks comfort rather than inviting auditors to take action to address the needs in their community.

In summary, the sermons of Rollins and Timberlake sermon ask the audience of Substance's church services to work for the cause of racial unity and meet the needs of community members in the Twin Cities, but the metaphors contained within the sermons perform constitutive work that offers the congregation a subjectivity that views itself as heroic and righteous but is ultimately disengaged, static, and inward-looking in response to the racial crisis. Lurking beneath the surface of colorblind calls to unity and love lie theological arguments that invite Substance to view the Twin Cities through the lens of Samaria and to view the inhabitants of their region, particularly who those reside in areas of the city that Substance's largely-suburban congregation might typically avoid, as promiscuous foreigners whose immorality and lack of faith are the root cause of the problems in the city. Organized around the spatial metaphor of Twin Cities-as-Samaria, the clusters of metaphors in the sermons present racial justice work as an unwanted detour from the church's primary mission of sharing a gospel message, construct Jesus and the church as infiltrating and dominating forces, and construct congregants as both helpless victims and unscrupulous innkeepers who leave the work of changing lives to Christ. The next three sermons, all delivered by Peter Haas, perform similar constitutive functions by using the biblical space of Jericho as portrayed within a narrative of ethnic conflict to characterize the crisis in the Twin Cities.

Racial Conflict and Promiscuity in Biblical Jericho

In his sermons on June 10, 14, and 21, Substance Lead Pastor Peter Haas draws upon the biblical space of Jericho depicted in the Old Testament book of Joshua as a metaphor for the crisis in the Twin Cities. Thought to have been located in what is now known as the West Bank, the walled city of Jericho and its Canaanite inhabitants present the first obstacle to the people of Israel in the narrative of their conquest of the Promised Land.[78] The biblical text narrates how, after forty years of wandering in the desert under Moses's leadership, Joshua leads the Israelite people on a campaign of espionage and conquest against Jericho that culminates with the miraculous collapse of its walls and the slaughter of its inhabitants.[79] That collapse occurs after Israel's army marches around the city and blows trumpets on seven consecutive days, a strategy given to Joshua by a divine figure described as the "Commander of the Lord's army."[80] Competing theories identify this figure as an appearance of God himself, an angel, or a "pre-incarnate appearance" of Jesus Christ prior to his birth in the New Testament.[81] Regardless of the precise nature of the divine figure, his appearance and conversation with Joshua are a core element of the narrative that Haas emphasizes in his sermons.

The character of Rahab also figures significantly into Haas's sermon. In the biblical narrative, all of the city's inhabitants are slaughtered save for the family of Rahab, a "harlot" who harbored the Israelite spies who came to survey the land.[82] Like the woman at the well, Rahab and her role in the passage have been the subject of a variety of competing interpretations: a righteous convert whose sinful promiscuity is forgiven because of her assistance to the Israelite spies, an unfairly-maligned innkeeper rather than a prostitute, or a sexualized victim of the spies' intrusion into her homeland.[83] Reflecting a typical evangelical interpretation, one Bible commentary describes her as the "first Gentile convert" whose faith saved her family despite the

fact that she was a "citizen of a wicked city that was under God's condemnation."[84] Critiquing the Joshua text, Vaka'uta observes that biblical narrations of Israel's "border-crossing events" often "stigmatize native women as harlots and/or potential seductresses."[85] Evangelicals valorize Rahab for her faith in Israel's God, but these interpretations simultaneously cast her as an abject, promiscuous figure who narrowly escapes slaughter because of an unlikely conversion to the Israelite faith.[86] In subsequent paragraphs, I demonstrate how these and other abject characterizations play a problematic role in the metaphors that Haas deployed to characterize the Twin Cities and their inhabitants.

Peter Haas's Jericho Sermons

Also addressing the racial crisis in the Twin Cities, Substance Lead Pastor Peter Haas delivered a series of three sermons on June 10, 14, and 21 that draws parallels between Substance's relationship to the Twin Cities and Joshua's relationship to Jericho in the Old Testament. During a midweek prayer service on June 10, Haas preaches to his congregation about how to respond to the pandemic and racial crisis.[87] Using Joshua 5:13-14 as the basis for his sermon, he narrates Joshua's encounter with and submission to the character that the text identifies as the "Commander of the Army of the Lord" and argues that the church must take on "the same spirit of Joshua," a "spirit of surrender" to God for insights into how to tackle the challenge before them.[88] Haas elaborates on this narrative in his June 14 Sunday sermon and then draws lessons from the lives of composer Ludwig van Beethoven and his mother Maria, arguing that God wants people to rely upon faith in the face of crises and reject "us versus them narratives."[89] On June 21, Haas teaches about the transformative power of prayer and calls Christians to "take authority over the city" through prayer and outreach work.[90] These messages all build upon a foundational spatial metaphor that uses the conflict at Jericho as portrayed in the

Joshua narrative to characterize the crisis unfolding in the Twin Cities and offer guidance to auditors for responding to it.

Crises in Jericho and the Twin Cities

In these sermons, Haas uses Jericho as portrayed in the Old Testament book of Joshua as a metaphor for the crisis in the Twin Cities and invites his auditors to inhabit a subjectivity inspired by Joshua's role in the conflict between the Israelites and Jericho. In his June 10 sermon, Haas begins by telling the congregation that he wants to talk about the concept of "spiritual warfare."[91] He then describes Minneapolis as the "epicenter for a global conversation on race [and] racial tension" and describes how this has created an experience of "crisis fatigue" as "people's bodies are filled with a stress hormone called cortisol" that causes "the entire culture" to get "more angry and cranky" and have a lower IQ.[92] Notably, this language positions the "conversation on race," rather than the murder that occasioned it, as the source of that stress and fatigue. This setup, which implies a threat to the image of the church because of its place at the epicenter of a conversation about racism, invites the subsequent use of constitutive rhetoric to reconstitute the church's threatened identity.[93] In this case, Haas's message uses the Joshua narrative to reassure the congregation that, despite the chaos surrounding them and the negative rhetoric defining their city at the time, they already safely are on God's side. Drawing parallels between contemporary racial tensions and the ethnic conflict portrayed in the book of Joshua, Haas explains that "God's people were entering into Canaan" and "knew a war was coming" and were therefore also feeling "impending doom, the stress hormone, the cortisol."[94] He later reinforces this parallel between congregants and Joshua by describing Joshua himself as "feeling insecure" in "the middle of a crisis."[95] His June 14 sermon also encourages his congregation to identify with Joshua and the Israelites by describing them sympathetically as "the underdogs"

who are "attacking the big dog city."[96] This spatial metaphor aligns with culture war narratives that frame evangelicals as victimized "underdogs" being menaced by larger cultural forces. It also invites the congregation to view the crisis as a moment to choose between a unifying divine agenda and divisive social agendas.

A Singular Agenda

Building upon his invitation to view the crisis in the Twin Cities through the lens of biblical Jericho, Haas's sermon invites auditors to inhabit a subjectivity that views the racial crisis as the divisive product of human insecurities and a failure to submit to God. Haas discusses how the "Commander of the Lord's Armies" responds to an inquiry from Joshua about whose side the divine figure is on by stating that "there's only one agenda here" because "there's only one righteous entity in the entirety of the whole universe, and his name is God."[97] Haas states that Joshua's tendency to view the situation as a binary conflict between two "sides" is a product of a type of insecurity, a "big problem in society," that Haas says also emerges in war, divorce, and moral debate.[98] Elaborating on what the Commander's response means, Haas presents submission to God's agenda as the only distinction that matters:

> You're either submitted to him or you're missing the whole moment here. Don't. And really, if you could translate it this way, I mean, why would God do this? Why would he say neither? He's basically saying, don't you dare make me try to choose sides in your us versus them narrative. Don't you dare try to make me subservient to your insecurity, Joshua, because that's what it is.[99]

This language suggests that social clashes and moral debates such as the ones surrounding the racial crisis are manifestations of personal insecurity. It also presents auditors with the choice to either unify around God's divine agenda or continue being a part of the divisive problem. Auditors who accept this framing can rest assured that they are not replicating Joshua's insecurity or resorting to "us versus them" bickering as long as they stay above, and therefore out

of, the fray. Those who "choose sides" in the "us versus them" of the race conversation are contributing to society's "insecurity" problem by participating in divisive clashes and failing to submit to the singular agenda of God.

Rather than directing his audience's attention to the violent conclusion of the Jericho narrative, Haas takes his metaphor in an alternative direction. Though Haas discusses the miraculous collapse of Jericho's walls, he never mentions God's command in Joshua 6:17 that the city and its inhabitants subsequently be "devoted to the Lord," an Old Testament turn of phrase that refers to the total destruction of a person or thing as a sacrifice to God, or the slaughter of all of the city's inhabitants save the family of Rahab in Joshua 6:21.[100] Instead, he invites his listeners to model their behavior after a passage in the New Testament book of James that describes "wisdom from heaven" as pure, peace-loving, and considerate.[101] It is nevertheless concerning that, until this turn, Haas's Jericho metaphor situates the congregation within a narrative of divinely-mandated violence that concludes with the annihilation of an enemy city. The omission of the narrative's conclusion creates ambiguity. The call to imitate "wisdom from heaven" by pursuing peace suggests that congregants should not mobilize as agents of conflict, but auditors who follow the Jericho narrative to its conclusion see Joshua and his army slaughter the populace of the city that they are tasked to invade. While Substance's rhetoric calls for peace rather than violence, Haas's use of a narrative laden with ethnic conflict to characterize the crisis in the Twin Cities and his invitation to auditors to identify with Joshua and his conquering army risk carrying the antagonism of that narrative into the present-day crisis. Haas's use of the language of invasion further contributes to this ambiguity.

Haas describes the church's outreach efforts using an invasion metaphor that offers congregants a heroic subjectivity. During his June 21 sermon, Haas plays a video from his

Instagram page in which he uses warlike language to describe a Manna Market charity event hosted by the church in downtown Minneapolis. He says,

> I know a lot of you have been hearing about the chaos in the media, all the National Guard coming into Minneapolis, and you guys saw us have to board up our downtown campus. But let me tell you something, we have not boarded up our hearts. In fact, the invasion of hope is just beginning. We've been sending praise and worship teams into downtown just to change things spiritually. But even more than that, we've been bringing truckloads of food just to really bless our people and truly show them the love of God.[102]

He then describes how the church needs to "operate in the opposite spirit of our city and our nation" to defeat hate.[103] This oppositional language could be interpreted as a call to oppose the "spirit" of hatred and systemic racism on display in Floyd's death, but it could also fuel feelings of victimization and antagonism among auditors who already feel at odds with the community. Given that Haas has already invited the congregation to identify with Joshua's invasion force in his messaging up to this point, his allusion to the National Guard's entry into the city and his descriptions of "truckloads of food" and "worship teams" being brought from the Northtown Campus into downtown Minneapolis to "change things spiritually" could call to mind either wartime images of supply line logistics and strike teams or disaster relief efforts.[104] The blending of language related to charity work and military operations creates ambiguity regarding the relationship between the congregation and community. The invasion metaphor invites congregants to adopt the role of a hero entering into a space of chaos to "change things spiritually" by restoring order, but the choice to describe the Manna Market outreach as an invasion is troubling when considering Substance's positionality as a suburban megachurch from a predominantly White community led by a White founding pastor working to establish a presence in a racially diverse urban community. Though the language of invasion may imply

violence or dominance, Haas does not call his auditors to engage in violent activity. Instead, he invites congregants to inhabit a subjectivity characterized by ineffectual agency.

Ineffectual Agents

In addition to portraying the racial justice movement as divisive, Haas's framing of the crisis also suggests that participation in secular efforts to resist systemic racism is futile. Partway through his June 10 sermon, Haas uses Joshua's "surrender" to God to illustrate how auditors should respond to the present crisis. He says that like Joshua,

> We need to start surrendering, getting on our faces so that we're actually in sync with the God who's ultimately going to have the final word. I don't care what's going on right now, you know, who gets the final word? This God. There's nobody else, okay? So, if you really want to be on the winning side, the only way to do it is on your face, on your knees in surrender.[105]

Haas's language of surrender suggests that those pursuing what he later describes as "earthly" approaches to racial reform need, like Joshua, to surrender and accept that submission to a divine plan is the only way to truly achieve their goals. By suggesting that this notion of surrender to God is the only way to be on the winning side, this statement aligns with evangelical culture war narratives that emphasize a binary notion of winners and losers.[106] Auditors who agree with this message can rest assured that they remain on the right side, God's side, by avoiding involvement in secular reform efforts. Meanwhile, the burden of making the proper choice rests on those fruitlessly attempting to "have the final word" by pursuing secular approaches to reform.

Haas's use of a surrender metaphor to describe how his auditors should respond to the racial crisis in the Twin Cities also reflects eschatological pessimism about the ability of human agents to meaningfully address racism. He tells his congregation that "any crisis we solve is just going to result in another crisis next year" and argues that the "history of the world" supports this

assertion.[107] Addressing how the hopeless direction of human affairs should influence his congregants' view of social engagement, he says,

> I'm not trying to tell you, you know, don't be an advocate for things, but what I am trying to say is the ultimate way to be an advocate is just to get on your knees and surrender to heaven.[108]

He later adds that congregants can invest effort in political or "earthly" solutions "just to be helpful" and to "take a stand for righteousness," but that they should not "trust in these things" because "God's got the strategy, and that strategy is not going to be intuitive."[109] Haas's references to being "helpful" and being "an advocate" suggest that it might be appropriate for Christians to engage in social reform, but his language ranks those "strategies" as less effectual than a more abstract notion of personal surrender to God. Haas's messaging forecloses upon the possibility that genuine social progress might be achieved through secular means, aligning with premillennial eschatological discourses that encourage evangelicals to direct their effort towards saving individual souls rather than wasting it on reforming a faithless society that, like Jericho, is already condemned. Haas's emphasis on counterintuitive approaches to social reform further reinforces that alignment.

Haas also uses the counterintuitive and God-given nature of the strategy that miraculously brought down the walls of Jericho in the Joshua narrative to illustrate how evangelical congregants should approach the crisis in their city. This offers congregants an appealingly expedient subjectivity in which maintenance of the church's existing practices is the ideal response to the upsetting social crisis. After explaining that God's strategy is "not going to be intuitive," Haas describes what God had the Israelites do to bring down the walls of Jericho as a "really, really, really bizarre approach."[110] He says that God's "strategy" for solving their current problems "is just fundamentally always going to be different than what people will

recommend everywhere" and says that the only way for the city to "have hope and healing is if people like you and I get on our knees" and allow God to "birth in us the type of strategy that will bring about the hope and transformation that this region needs most."[111] These statements elevate personally-oriented spiritual practices like prayer over socially-oriented action. By telling congregants to put their trust in "bizarre" solutions to social issues that clash with solutions accepted by the wider public, Haas offers his congregation an appealing subjectivity that takes comfort in the notion that continuing their already-established spiritual practices is the best solution for the social crisis regardless of whether that approach leads to any socially beneficial outcomes. When combined with the narratives of victimization that I address next, this active-passivist message offers an ineffectual and inward-looking subjectivity to congregants.

Victimization and Comfort

Haas also uses narratives to support his metaphors that invite congregants to view themselves as victims. In his June 10 sermon, Haas tells a story about a city in Brazil that experienced a radical decrease in crime when a Christian prayer program began airing on the radio followed by a spike in crime after the program's cancellation. He then uses that situation as a metaphor for urban unrest and COVID restrictions on church gatherings in the United States. He describes how "murder rates right now in U.S. Cities are so high," points out that "Chicago just recorded the single greatest number of murders on a night ever," and blames this on how "from a spiritual standpoint, 400,000 evangelical churches [have been] forced to shut down indefinitely."[112] Haas's emphasis on the impact of this hinderance of *evangelical* spiritual activity on crime aligns with his emphasis on the evangelical message of surrender to God as the only effectual means of addressing the racial crisis. In his June 21 sermon, he expands those parallels with additional information about increasing global starvation, child mortality,

homicide, and suicide rates.[113] He describes how a hostage standoff in the Brazilian city was resolved peacefully after the radio prayer program was reinstated, and argues that this is because "people took authority over their city" through prayer.[114] The call to "take authority" further reinforces the notions of conquest established elsewhere in Substance's messaging and, by emphasizing the threat posed by urban crime and blaming that threat on church closures, Haas provides congregants with reasons to view themselves as victims, to be fearful of urban communities, and to be resentful towards COVID restrictions. This rhetoric feeds into culture war narratives that stoke resentment by framing evangelicals as victims of secular society.

Haas also uses a narrative about the Beethoven family to illustrate how auditors should respond to systemic oppression. He devotes much of his June 14 sermon to composer Ludwig van Beethoven's mother, Maria, and her struggles with mental health and abuse. Haas explains that Maria "was born a commoner" and "born a woman" and consequently "realized that her dream of climbing the social ladder was really farfetched" within a culture marked by "sexism and classism."[115] He narrates how she became a widow and a single mother at age eighteen and subsequently married a sexually abusive man who turned to alcohol "just to even cope with all this persecution from his own family" because of his marriage to a commoner.[116] After describing how Maria became pregnant with Ludwig after being raped by her husband and then contemplated suicide, Haas invites congregants navigating the racial crisis to identify with this low point in her life: "Maybe . . . you've got things going on and it's just, it's heavy on you. I've asked that question numerous times over the last couple months. God, why this? Why this crisis?" Haas then provides a dramatic narration of Maria's conversion, explaining that after spilling the cup of poison that she intended to use to end her own life,

> In the midst of that moment of just hysterics, she just stopped and she started praying to God. And she was like, 'God, where are you?' And the moment she

> even said that phrase, all of a sudden she just sensed the presence of God all over her.[117]

The choice to describe God being "all over her" is striking in light of the sexual abuse that Haas describes. With this sexualized language, Haas implies that Maria's escape from a sexually abusive relationship, from her inferiority as a woman in a sexist society, and from her chaotic feminine "hysterics" was only possible because of her submission to a physically intimate relationship with the ultimate masculine authority, God. Haas goes on to suggest that Maria got to achieve her dream of having social prestige because of that relationship:

> Maria ended up traveling the world with her son. She met some of the most exquisite people on planet Earth. And even though all the odds were against her, she ended up being able to transcend some of the constraints of her time. God took her to places she never even dreamed were possible.[118]

He concludes this conversionistic message, by explaining that things got better for Maria when she "got on her knees and surrendered to God."[119] After briefly mentioning Ludwig's struggle with deafness, Haas concludes that Ludwig and Maria were, like Joshua, "underdogs" who were born into a "system of oppression" and found that "God is the great equalizer" who, unlike "human systems," never fails.[120] Haas does not fully explain what he means about Joshua's birth into a system of oppression, which may be an allusion to slavery in Egypt, nor is he clear how Ludwig's deafness was the result of an unjust society. Regardless of its inelegance, this metaphor has several constitutive implications.

Haas's messaging aligns with the evangelical theology of conversionism that offers spiritual salvation and an enlightened lifestyle to converts but, at the same time, it invites listeners to inhabit an individualistic perspective that places the responsibility for alleviating suffering on the marginalized individual who must seek God's help as a cure-all for personal and societal issues alike. In Haas's narrative, Maria overcame both an oppressive society and her

personal struggles by embracing faith in God, not by benefitting from or participating in social reform efforts. The only barrier to her transformation from an abused commoner to a high society success in Haas's narrative is that she had not yet called out to God. The implication is that the same is true of auditors either experiencing racial oppression or feeling victimized by the racial crisis around them. This illustration of how to navigate the crisis also conceptually flattens suffering by suggesting that the suffering experienced by George Floyd and other victims of racial oppression and the suffering of Maria and Ludwig are all alike in that they are equally solvable with the panacea of faith. By this logic, the proper solution for the racial crisis is for community members to allow the evangelical message to spiritually uplift them rather than for evangelicals to become socially engaged in combating racism in their communities. This is not the only burden that Haas's messaging places on the marginalized.

Community of Harlots

By casting residents of the Twin Cities as Rahab, Haas's Jericho metaphor reifies racist tropes that associate urban space and dark skin with promiscuity. Haas asks congregants to take a divine perspective that looks at the spiritual potential of community members rather than demonizing them. He comments how "Rahab, who's actually a prostitute of all people," becomes the great grandmother of King David.[121] This statement aligns with traditional evangelical interpretations of Rahab that use her occupation to frame her as an unlikely convert to the Israelite religion. Haas then praises Rahab because of her place in the lineage of Christ, adding that "this person from Jericho, your enemy, is literally going to give birth to the savior of all mankind."[122] Evangelical auditors may consider this comparison of their racially diverse neighbors to Rahab as an acceptable or even flattering illustration of how an outsider could become a significant figure in the Christian faith. At the same time, however, this metaphor casts

those neighbors as an abject, promiscuous other who narrowly escaped slaughter because she was willing to submit to an invading force. Haas does not explicitly mention race during this argument, but his sermon's emphasis on racial tensions in the Twin Cities equips auditors to implicitly link Rahab, the promiscuous foreigner, to their racially diverse neighbors.[123] Haas's sermon thus provides metaphoric reinforcement for racist tropes that link urban space, dark skin, and undesirable behavior.

In summary, Haas's sermons build a cluster of metaphors around a spatial metaphor that invites his congregation to understand the crisis in the Twin Cities through the lens of biblical Jericho and to inhabit a role based on Joshua and his army. This invites congregants to inhabit the heroic role of an invading force and casts inhabitants of the Twin Cities as abject others whose divisiveness and lack of faith are responsible for their suffering. Rather than emphasizing the destructive implications of that conqueror role, however, Haas constructs an ineffectual agency for congregants in relation to racial crises by using the unintuitive strategy given to Joshua by God for tearing down the walls of Jericho as a metaphor for viewing the church's spiritual practices as the only effective response to Floyd's death and the systemic racism implicated in it. Haas also describes the church as a victim of pandemic lockdowns and criminal activity, places the responsibility for overcoming systemic racism on individuals who are victimized by it, and reinforces harmful spatial meanings associated with America's urban spaces.

Read as a whole, the clusters of metaphors deployed in the sermon series consisting of Haas's Jericho sermons and the Samaria sermons of Substance's guest preachers cohere into a larger pattern of meaning with implications for Substance's relationship to its community in the context of a racial crisis. The metaphoric clusters within this sermon series invite congregants to

inhabit subjectivities based upon heroic figures like Joshua and Christ, but those figures are simultaneously presented as conquering heroes whose goal is to invade with a message of submission that represents the only true hope for the Twin Cities. As for how to achieve that goal, clusters of static metaphors elevate the church's internal spiritual practices and preaching of a salvation message over the undesirable detour of ministering to people within the community. The following section articulates the implications of these meanings and contributes to rhetorical scholarship's understanding of metaphoric clusters and their constitutive effects.

Beneath the Surface at Substance

I set out to understand how clusters of space and mobility metaphors within theological rhetoric influence religious auditors' subjectivities in relation to racial justice issues. After examining these sermons, I searched online for church webpages, social media posts, news articles, and other online sources that might provide insight into how Substance's race rhetoric and outreach efforts were received by congregants and community members. I found little discourse that could shed light upon the direct effects of Substance's race rhetoric. At the time of writing, Substance continues to operate its Manna Market food recovery ministry and produce sermons about race.[124] In 2021, the church also launched the "Substance Leadership Pipeline," a partnership program that collaborates with pastors from other churches to host conferences and produce digital resources to help Christian leaders navigate topics of race and diversity.[125] Substance has also continued to invite Jimmy Rollins and Tim Timberlake to serve as guest speakers.[126] These facts suggest that Substance has continued to pursue the rhetorical approach to race issues that it pursued in the sermons analyzed in this chapter. That suggests that auditors may have been receptive to the subjectivity offered to them in Substance's George Floyd

sermons: a subjectivity that responds to social unrest by focusing on maintaining the church's existing practices, ministries, and messaging while leaving the ultimate responsibility for changing society to Christ. That said, constitutive readings are not limited to consideration of a discourse's direct effects. As I explained in Chapter 1, my goal is to investigate the constitutive implications of metaphor that lurk beneath and may persist beyond those direct persuasive effects. To that end, the following paragraphs discuss how these sermons constructed problematic subjectivities for congregants and consider the implications should those subjectivities be accepted and inhabited by auditors.

First, this analysis contributes to rhetorical studies of evangelicalism by identifying how space and mobility metaphors within religious discourse perform the kind of problematic constitutive work that sustains evangelicalism's whiteness while operating beneath the surface of a veneer of colorblind messages. In Chapter 1, I outlined calls within rhetorical scholarship for investigation into how rhetorics of space and mobility negatively influence political subjectivities and therefore provide rationalizations for oppressive practices. I also drew upon studies of evangelicalism's powerful and often harmful influence on the American racial landscape. Unlike the explicitly racist theological arguments that evangelicals once used to rationalize slavery and segregation, the Samaria and Jericho metaphors in these sermons rationalize racial division through clusters of metaphors. The idea that evangelical theological rhetoric offers imperialistic or victimization-focused subjectivities to congregations is nothing new, but this analysis demonstrates that even messages that are absent of content that religious auditors might perceive as explicitly racist may contain clusters of metaphors that invite congregants to adopt adversarial, passive, or ineffectual subjectivities in response to racial justice issues. On the surface, these sermons ask auditors to meet the physical and spiritual needs of

racially marginalized people, reject divisive narratives from media figures and politicians, and oppose racism and systemic oppression. However, the metaphors in these sermons also build an underlying constitutive foundation of cultural warfare beneath the surface of those messages. That foundation places the church at odds with wider culture, presents the church as the true victim of social unrest, and denigrates the inhabitants of the Twin Cities as "Rahabs" and "Samaritan women" whose moral inferiority supplies a rationalization for their mistreatment. Auditors who inhabit the inward-focused, individualistic, antagonistic, and eschatologically pessimistic subjectivities offered to them from the pulpit can take comfort that they are on God's side and following the Bible's guidance about confronting racism while also having inhabited a subjectivity that discourages them from meaningfully responding to racial injustice, systemic or otherwise. Scholars of evangelical rhetoric should pay close attention to the lurking space and mobility metaphors present in evangelical discourse because of these harmful implications.

Analysis of these sermons also demonstrates how metaphors that frame race issues in terms of unmet *individual* spiritual needs undercut socially-focused calls to action. In contrast to a Social Gospel message that might advocate for collective efforts to oppose systemic racism, these sermons invite congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that ignores the systemic dimension of racism by deploying clusters of metaphors that present personal spiritual salvation as the ultimate solution to the social phenomenon of oppression. When the sermons do address systemic racism, it is presented either as a secondary issue that could be supernaturally resolved by undergoing conversion or as an individual issue that those experiencing systemic oppression must overcome through private perseverance and personal faith. Rollins's Samaria sermon does implore congregants to confront racism, but his metaphor presents that work as an unwanted detour. At best, racial justice work might be an unintended byproduct of a "detour" on the church's

"journey" to share a gospel message of personal salvation. Haas likewise uses the lives of Beethoven and his mother as a metaphor for how individuals may overcome the struggles caused by systemic oppression today by turning to faith. This type of metaphor use reifies an evangelical hierarchy of values that elevates personal salvation and perseverance over socially-oriented solutions to racial oppression. Even if Substance's sermons did offer critiques of systemic racism and direct calls to engage in antiracist reform like the sermons that I analyze in Chapter 4, the subjectivity-shaping work performed beneath the surface of those kinds of calls to action would undermine them by producing subjectivities for whom disengagement is a more reasonable response. The race rhetoric of preachers at Substance offers the congregation a subjectivity that is consistent with inaction aside from a continued pursuit of the church's spiritual practices.

More specifically, this analysis demonstrates how metaphors based upon spaces of racial conflict may invite auditors to inhabit subjectivities that are adversarial towards the racial justice movement and, ultimately, expedient for congregants. Clusters of metaphors in these sermons invite congregants to identify with characters who are either conquerors or victims within the biblical spaces of Jericho and Samaria. The congruity and incongruity inherent in metaphor may enable these sermons to "carry over" the ethnic antagonism of biblical narratives into present-day racial antagonisms.[127] Rollins invites auditors to imitate Jesus's efforts to "infiltrate" the Samaritan woman. Timberlake's treatment of the innkeeper role warns auditors that while they have a responsibility to care for those wounded by society, the true responsibility for doing that work ultimately lies with Christ. Haas invites auditors to step into the shoes of Joshua as he prepares to follow a divine mandate that culminates in the slaughter Jericho's inhabitants. By mixing metaphors of warfare and healing, Substance's racial crisis messaging creates ambiguity that leaves room for auditors to come to harmful conclusions when interpreting the church's

guidance. Though these sermons commend humane responses to suffering, the presence of metaphoric clusters that contain the language of invasion and infiltration may equip auditors to interpret the crisis in the Twin Cities as an ethnic conflict with the congregation as God's army of chosen winners on one side and community members as faithless losers on the other. Warfare metaphors tend to foreclose on possibilities for peaceful resolution in times of conflict, particularly when they emphasize the savagery or inferiority of the group positioned as the enemy.[128] These sermons never call for violence, but they lay a rhetorical foundation of cultural warfare that could equip auditors to rationalize or ignore the unjust exercise of violence against those who have been portrayed as enemies.[129] Instead of inviting congregants to follow through on the violent implications of their combative framing of the racial crisis, rhetors at Substance invite congregants to look inward, draw comfort from their beliefs, and offer that same comfort as a panacea for the social issues shaking the surrounding community.

This analysis raises questions about whether it is violent metaphors themselves or the particular applications of those metaphors that have an erosive effect on evangelical community relations. In this case, the harmful implications of the warfare metaphors present in Substance's race sermons may be less a consequence of choosing a metaphoric vehicle related to warfare and more a result of specific language choices that place church member and community member on opposite sides of the line of engagement. I pursue this line of questioning further in Chapter 4 after examining metaphors based on biblical notions of spiritual warfare that direct congregants to engage in nonviolent opposition to White supremacy. The constitutive approach to metaphor that I apply in this chapter is later useful for considering that positioning and its implications.

Additionally, this analysis also reveals how spatial metaphor use within evangelical theological discourse may undergird racist tropes by linking the negative meanings attached to

certain Bible characters with urban space. These links sustain moral economies of place that harmfully stereotype Black residents of urban space as dangerous, chaotic, or criminal figures.[130] In this case, rhetors at Substance used gendered language that specifically portrayed residents of the Twin Cities as promiscuous figures that align with sexualized racist tropes like the Jezebel and the welfare queen.[131] Though evangelicals sometimes valorize Rahab and the Samaritan woman as examples of faith and repentance, auditors who accept the negative aspects of those portrayals may be more likely to dismiss police brutality incidents against Black people in urban spaces as reasonable or deserved outcomes for members of an abject group. Bible passages may contain inventional resources for "radical social critiques" of racism, but the interpretive choices of preachers at Substance contribute to the rhetorical groundwork upon which oppressive practices rest.[132] Metaphoric cluster criticism offers rhetorical critics a means of shining a light upon metaphors that, though they might be perceived by auditors as innocuous in isolation, contribute to the harmful racialization of urban space and its inhabitants.

Furthermore, this analysis contributes to studies of evangelical rhetoric by identifying how the deployment of metaphors based upon biblical spaces of conflict feed into evangelical culture war narratives by framing evangelicals as victims of those they perceive as their cultural enemies. Timberlake's treatment of the parable of the Good Samaritan invites congregants to view themselves as the assaulted traveler in the narrative. Though rhetors in a variety of Christian traditions including evangelicalism commonly interpret the parable as a call to seek out and care for those who are suffering despite religious and racial differences, Timberlake's metaphoric interpretation shifts the responsibility for that care onto Christ by casting him as the Good Samaritan and relegating the auditor to the passive role of victim and the tenuous role of the untrustworthy innkeeper. Timberlake further contributes to perceptions of victimhood by

identifying evangelicals as victims of a vaguely-defined and unseen enemy.[133] Constitutive rhetoric that emphasizes victimhood produces collective identities primed for conflict, and congregants who are directed to blame an "invisible giant" for the distress caused by the racial crisis may seek more tangible targets for their ire.[134] Haas's blaming of urban unrest on a lack of spiritual activity caused by COVID lockdowns likewise positions evangelicals as victims of secular society and is unlikely to motivate sympathetic responses towards members of the surrounding community who are elsewhere presented as morally deficient representatives of that society. Although these sermons rationalize hostility, they dilute that hostility with images of passivity.

This analysis also offers scholars of evangelical rhetoric insight into the constitutive work performed by static metaphors. By employing a cluster of such metaphors, Substance's rhetoric invites auditors to inhabit an immobile subjectivity that rejects social engagement with racial justice issues. The warfare metaphors in Substance's race rhetoric may gesture towards an aggressive subjectivity for the congregation, but metaphors based upon static imagery blunt that aggression by inviting congregants to focus inward on the life of the church rather than moving outward towards the needs in their community. The combination of clusters of warlike and static metaphors invites congregants to inhabit a subjectivity characterized by a defensive and insular response to race issues. Rather than pushing congregants to take material action to confront racial injustice outside of the walls of the church, metaphors at Substance prompt them to follow the active-passivist pattern of looking inward and trusting that the church's existing spiritual practices will indirectly bring about social change if such a change is even possible. Haas's eschatological pessimism precludes the possibility of a society free from racial turmoil. The purpose of this analysis is not to question the sincerity or meaningfulness of spiritual practices

for congregants, but rather to consider the implications of rhetoric that elevates those practices as the most proper and most effective response to a racial crisis and thereby discourages participation in much needed social reform efforts. To that point, these sermons offer congregants an individualistic and inward-looking subjectivity that accepts the status quo and is unlikely to meaningfully engage in reform work. In that sense, this subjectivity has more in common with the reclusiveness of the post-Scopes fundamentalists than with the social engagement of the Social Gospel tradition. If it stays this course, Substance's rhetoric is unlikely to meaningfully challenge systemic racism, bridge any of the rhetorical divisions that maintain evangelicalism's whiteness and separation from the Black Protestant tradition, or foster improved relations between the predominantly White megachurch and the racially diverse communities that it neighbors.

The erosive effects of metaphor use in evangelical theological rhetoric are particularly troubling when considering Substance's positionality as a White-led, suburban church working to build connections within the community of downtown Minneapolis. By framing that effort as a campaign of conquest, Substance's rhetoric finds a degree of alignment with White Christian nationalist discourses that blend Christian themes of victimhood, conquest, and cultural warfare with an anti-democratic emphasis on taking over or "taking back" America in the name of God.[135] That alignment may be the inadvertent result of hastily made or clumsy choices about which biblical metaphors to apply to the crisis rather than malicious intent. A plain reading of Substance's explicit advocacy indicates that the church's messaging does not align with White Christian nationalist values or goals as a whole. Regardless of intent, however, the metaphor use in the church's race rhetoric performs constitutive work that feeds into the same underlying racial and cultural antagonisms that fuel that harmful ideology. Because this kind of disconnect

between explicit advocacy and constitutive work is possible, critics examining theological rhetorics should heed Hostetler's call to look beyond the direct persuasive effects of metaphors and attend to their constitutive implications. Metaphoric cluster criticism is a vital tool for unpacking that constitutive work and its repercussions, and it offers scholars of evangelical race rhetoric an incisive way of untangling the problematic whiteness that entwines itself with evangelical discourse.[136]

Concluding Thoughts

In summary, this case study demonstrates the value of metaphoric criticism as an approach to reading the constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors, including metaphors of space and mobility. By analyzing the metaphors that Substance's sermons used to define the racial crisis in the Twin Cities and situate congregants within it, I uncovered how metaphor use within theological rhetoric invited congregants to inhabit subjectivities that are at best passive in response to race issues and at worst antagonistic. The constitutive work performed by these clusters of metaphors worked against the explicit calls to positive action in the sermons. Metaphors based on spaces of racial conflict fed into culture war narratives and bolstered racist tropes that undergird racially unjust practices. I conclude for these reasons that a constitutive approach to metaphoric criticism offers rhetorical critics a potent tool for uncovering and critiquing constitutive rhetorics that lay a foundation for the mistreatment of marginalized groups beneath the surface of positive-sounding messages about racial unity and love.

As a whole, the metaphoric rhetoric produced at Substance to address Floyd's death constituted a subjectivity for the congregation that, if accepted and inhabited, would guide them to ignore rather than address systemic racism. Such rhetoric reinforces, rather than bridges, the

divisions stemming from evangelicalism's historical whiteness. Substance's effort to platform Black pastors could be a positive step towards bridging evangelicalism's historical whiteness, but it also seems telling that Substance chose to do so by flying in Black pastors who lead evangelical megachurches in other regions rather than building connections with Black Christian leaders in the Twin Cities. This may reflect an interest in platforming Black preachers within the evangelical tradition who, at least as far as these sermons reveal, align with the evangelical hierarchy of values that emphasizes individual salvation and personal moral reform over social concerns rather than building relationships with local churches and preachers in the Black Protestant tradition like those I mentioned in Chapter 1 whose rhetoric includes a stronger emphasis on combatting systemic racism.[137] Flying in Black pastors from other regions could also give auditors the impression that the church was attempting to address race matters without requiring that the church's leaders ask the congregation to significantly change their practices or relationship with the racially diverse communities in their own local region. It is admirable that Substance operates ministries aimed at meeting the material needs of marginalized communities in the Twin Cities. However, this analysis reveals how constitutive uses of metaphor within evangelical race rhetoric can hamper positive social engagement. This analysis offers a cautionary example.

Rhetorical leaders who wish to mobilize their organizations or religious communities for the purpose for addressing racial division should be cautious of using spaces of biblical or historical conflict as metaphors for present-day crises, should reject the use of metaphors of warfare and invasion to characterize charity or reform work, should be wary of metaphors that apply negative or racially-charged meanings to the communities they are attempting to reach, and should avoid static metaphors that valorize passive or inward-looking responses over clear

and effectual action against the causes and effects of systemic injustice. By the same token, rhetorical critics who are committed to the cause of racial justice should be on the lookout for these types of metaphor use. Though investigating Substance's activities in the years following these sermons did not uncover any catastrophic outcomes for the church and its relationship to the Twin Cities, the constitutive implications of the rhetorical pitfalls in its race rhetoric are likely to be subtle: less engagement from congregants in community outreach efforts, ineffectual responses to the underlying causes of systemic racism, and unwitting or undesirable contribution to the discursive foundations upon which unjust practices rest.

It should be noted, however, that the negative implications of Substance's rhetoric are not a consequence of the sermons failing to meet the rhetorical and theological expectations of auditors, but rather a result of the type of rhetoric being used to meet those expectations. The clusters of metaphors deployed in Substance's sermon produced formations of meaning that, for all intents and purposes, appear to have been acceptable to the congregation's "sense of reality."[138] That is not surprising given that these messages offered congregants an expedient subjectivity for whom the proper response to the crisis is to take comfort in their beliefs and stay their present course. The formations of meaning produced by the clusters of metaphors present within the sermons align with established evangelical values and theologies, but these sermons fail to meaningfully challenge the racial status quo in that process.

In Substance's case, the three rhetors whose sermons I analyzed offered congregants similar perspectives on race. In the next chapter, I investigate race sermons from Bethlehem Baptist Church. This Twin Cities megachurch underwent a contentious split following disagreements over how to address the racial crisis. By examining sermons from three different pastors whose clusters of metaphors presented the congregation with divergent subjectivities to

inhabit in relation to race issues, I uncover how the church's racial discourse laid a fragmentary constitutive foundation for congregants that was conducive to the church's subsequent division.

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Chapter 3: Racing and Suffering at Bethlehem Baptist Church

Bethlehem Baptist Church

As chaos unfolded in the Twin Cities in the days following George Floyd's murder, another kind of disharmony was beginning to unfold among the three campuses, dozens of elders, and thousands of members comprising Bethlehem Baptist Church. With a main campus located in downtown Minneapolis and satellite campuses in the northern and southern suburbs, Bethlehem found itself at the heart of the racial crisis that shook the Twin Cities in the summer of 2020. Just two years later, the church would abandon its multi-site church model and split into three separate churches. The intervening years were marked by sharp disagreements among pastors, elders, and congregants over the church's theological views of empathy and the practical implications of how the church should apply those views when addressing racial justice issues.[1] The contention resulted the departure of several pastors in the summer of 2021. Foreshadowing those disagreements, sermons from the weeks following Floyd's death reveal sharp differences in the race rhetoric of the pastors who shared the main campus's pulpit.

In this chapter, I conduct a metaphoric cluster analysis of a series of three sermons on race delivered by three Bethlehem pastors at the church's then-main campus. This case study provides an opportunity to explore how metaphors mediate theology into divergent constitutive guidance. I argue that the metaphoric clusters deployed by each pastor offered congregants competing perspectives on race despite their sermons' reliance upon a shared set of theological concepts. More specifically, space and mobility metaphors within the sermons mediated theology into vastly different perspectives on the urgency and level of engagement with which congregants should respond to systemic injustice and racialized violence. To set the backdrop for

that analysis, I begin with an overview of Bethlehem Baptist Church's history and its place of prominence in conservative evangelical circles before outlining the controversy that unfolded at the church following its George Floyd rhetoric.

Division at Bethlehem

Bethlehem Baptist Church has a long history in the Twin Cities. Originally founded as a church for Swedish worshippers in 1871, more than a century of growth saw the independent Baptist church develop into a multi-site megachurch with 2400 members across three locations.[2] The original congregation in the comparatively racially diverse Elliot Park neighborhood of Minneapolis commissioned satellite campuses in the more predominantly White suburbs of Mounds View in 2005 and Lakeville in 2006.[3] Unlike other evangelical churches in which pastors carry the primary responsibility for administrative and spiritual leadership, Bethlehem is governed by a "Council of Elders" or elder board. As of 2021, this board consisted of more than forty congregationally-approved male leaders and pastors who oversaw the teaching and administrative operations of the church.[4] From 1980 to 2013, John Piper served as Bethlehem's lead pastor. At the same time, he grew a large following in conservative evangelical circles by writing dozens of theological books, founding the Desiring God media ministry, and taking a leadership role at the Bethlehem College & Theological Seminary (BCS) where he serves as chancellor at the time of this writing.[5] Piper's celebrity status within the evangelical world brought prominence to Bethlehem and attention to his eventual successor, Jason Meyer.

Hand-picked by Piper and unanimously approved during a 2013 congregational vote, Meyer had big shoes to fill as the new Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem's main campus.[6] Meyer was selected for the role in part because of his attitude regarding race issues. At

the time, Piper had recently written extensively about how positive influences in his personal life and theological education led him to abandon racist attitudes that he had learned as a White youth in the American South.[7] After Meyer was hired, Piper told an interviewer that Meyer's commitment to "racial reconciliation" and the fact that Meyer is a White man who adopted two Black children were considered a "big plus" in favor of his fit with Bethlehem.[8] Meyer's commitments would eventually spur his departure from the church. On May 31, 2020, the Sunday after George Floyd was murdered, Meyer preached the first sermon that I analyze in this chapter. In it, he told the church that they would need to "get another pastor" if they disliked his critiques of racism.[9] Those words proved prescient.

South campus Pastor for Preaching and Vision Dave Zuleger and main campus Pastor for Church Planting Kenny Stokes preached the other two sermons that I analyze in this chapter on the two following Sundays. These pastors' racial identity and their presentations of that identity merit attention given that their preaching signifies not just the religious perspective of a pastor but also the racial perspective of an embodied rhetor. Unlike in Meyer's case, I did not locate any rhetoric indicating whether race was a consideration in Stokes's or Zuleger's hiring. Zuleger, who describes himself as a Wisconsin native, joined Bethlehem as the South Campus Pastor in 2018 after completing his schooling.[10] In his George Floyd sermon, he uses the euphemistic term "majority culture person" rather than "White" to describe himself and the majority of Bethlehem's congregants.[11] Born in the Twin Cities, Stokes began his tenure at Bethlehem as Pastor for Urban Ministries in 1998 after a decade pastoring a smaller Baptist church in Iowa.[12] I am uncertain how Stokes identifies racially, but his preaching contains statements that downplay racial identity. In a 2014 sermon, he argues that "by creation, there's only one race of human

beings. From one man, God created every nation of mankind."[13] Similar rhetoric about racial identity occurs in the sermons at hand.

Unlike Substance, the church that I studied in Chapter 2, the sermons preached at Bethlehem would provoke vastly different reactions from audience members. As the racial crisis unfolded in the Twin Cities, Neighborhood Outreach Pastor Ming-Jinn Tong led Bethlehem's effort to address hunger issues caused by the destruction of grocery stores in the upheaval by setting up "pop up" grocery stands, delivering food, and buying out the inventory of damaged stores.[14] In the following months, race issues and questions about how to respond to victims of abuse sparked controversy at Bethlehem as Tong, Meyer, and other pastors and members calling for racial solidarity and compassion clashed with elders who labeled them too "empathetic."

Tensions about how to respond to race issues soon boiled over at Bethlehem. Within two years of the racial crisis in the summer of 2020, the church would see the exit of three pastors and would split into three separate congregations. The months of controversies that preceded that separation reveal deep-seated divisions regarding how church leaders and members perceived their responsibilities of care for victims of marginalization and abuse. Two church members brought forward a resolution during a January 2021 church business meeting that would formally separate the views of Bethlehem Baptist Church from the views of BCS President Joe Rigney after Rigney sparked controversy by describing empathy for victims of oppression and abuse as a sin during a podcast interview with another theologian.[15] The proposal led to conflict between "pro-empathy" members who supported the resolution and a North campus elder and BCS professor named Andy Naselli who voiced support for Rigney and threatened to resign from the elder board if the church even discussed the resolution.[16] The Council of Elders at Bethlehem released a statement in February of 2021 arguing that church members have a responsibility to be

politically engaged on issues like abortion where there is a "clear biblical command" but are free to disagree on race issues such as "accounting for ethnic disparities" and "specifying systemic injustices" that "require wisdom" and will lead to "differently calibrated consciences" among church members.[17] The statement conveyed to the church that the elders would not voice the kind of unified support for the cause of racial justice that they voice for other social causes like pro-life advocacy. Speaking later in support of the elder board's decision, Stokes stated that it was "not the role of the elders to put disclaimers on things."[18] Later in the year, members of a "Racial Harmony Task Force" created by the church were met with opposition from elders who characterized them as "Marxist" and "woke" and refused to implement the suggestions in their eighty-five-page report.[19] Clashes over these issues led to a staffing shakeup.

The rift at Bethlehem eventually resulted in the departure of several pastors. Pastor for Care and Counseling Bryan Pickering and Pastor for Neighborhood Outreach Ming-Jinn Tong clashed with elders, particularly after Tong spoke about his Taiwanese identity during a March 2021 sermon condemning the recent murders of Asian massage parlor workers in Atlanta.[20] The elder board removed Pickering and Tong from the preaching schedule early in the summer of 2021, leading to Tong's resignation in May and Pickering's resignation in June.[21] Jason Meyer returned from a sabbatical in July and announced his resignation shortly thereafter. In his resignation letter, Meyer responded to charges that he had "subordinated the gospel" to a social justice message, fostered a culture of "coddling" victims of abuse, and irresponsibly allowed "compassion to set the leadership agenda."[22] He argued that he and the other "empathetic" pastors were victims of a shame campaign by elders operating with a "unity culture" mindset that suppresses dialogue about sensitive matters.[23] These leadership changes formed the backdrop for subsequent operational changes.

In 2022, the North and South campuses formally separated from Bethlehem Baptist Church, establishing North Church and South Cities Church as independent congregations. Dave Zuleger remained at South Cities, becoming the lead pastor of his own congregation. Kenny Stokes became Bethlehem's Pastor for Preaching and Vision, filling the prominent role left by Meyer. Bethlehem's official narration of the church's history attributes the decision to split to God's guidance and a desire to see "stronger churches, more focused ministry, and greater gospel spreading."[24] Separation may have been a natural next step for Bethlehem after a 2020 church initiative had given each campus its own full-time preaching pastor and greater autonomy in making administrative decisions.[25] However, key pastoral departures and disputes over the handling of race issues may have also played a role in the decision to separate. My analysis of sermons preached by Meyer, Zuleger, and Stokes in the weeks following George Floyd's death provides a look into the constitutive guidance offered to Bethlehem's congregation at this contentious moment for the church and the Twin Cities. My goal is not to make causal arguments about the role these sermons may have played in the conflict at Bethlehem but rather to understand how metaphors within theological rhetoric mediate theology into guidance for congregants in relation to social issues such as race. That said, analysis of these sermons reveals constitutive rhetoric offering congregants clashing subjectivities in relation to the issues of race and empathy. Those clashes align with the fault lines of the church's conflict.

Blood and Suffering: Theology in Bethlehem's Race Sermons

A series of three sermons preached at Bethlehem's main campus on the theme of "When Suffering is Great" serve as the texts for analysis in this chapter. Jason Meyer began the series with a message entitled "What to Say When Suffering is Great" on May 31. Dave Zuleger, then

the South campus's Pastor for Preaching and Vision, preached "Where to Look When Suffering is Great" on June 7. Pastor for Church Planting Kenny Stokes preached "What to Do When Suffering is Great" on June 14. I have chosen not to focus on the sermons preached by Pastor Stephen Lee at Bethlehem's North campus primarily because the metaphors therein provide similar examples to Substance Church's rhetoric in Chapter 2. Lee's sermons, which use an Old Testament narrative about the kingdom of Judah at war as a metaphor for the crisis in the Twin Cities, provide relevant examples of the rhetorical phenomena that I examine in this project, but giving space to their analysis would be less fruitful than focusing on sermons from Bethlehem's main campus to uncover more about how metaphoric clusters function within theological discourse. Lee's sermons and their differences from the sermons that I analyze in this chapter do, however, highlight one important aspect of the situation at Bethlehem: pastors there were nowhere close to offering congregants a unified perspective on how they should respond to racial justice issues.[26]

The three main campus sermons that I analyze all deal with the theological concept of the atonement, a concept rooted in the crucicentric emphasis of evangelical theology. Taking rhetorical inspiration from passages like Luke 22:20 and Acts 20:28, evangelicals sometimes use the metaphor of a "blood purchase" to describe the theological view that Christ's death on the cross was a sacrifice of innocent blood that pays for the sins of any convert who believes in him.[27] The statement of faith of the National Association of Evangelicals provides a typical example of this language when it states belief "in [Christ's] vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory."[28] As this language suggests, evangelicals sometimes link atonement theology to eschatology by teaching that Christ will someday return to assemble

believers “from every tribe and tongue and nation” into a single, unified people group that worships him.[29] Critics warn that race rhetoric based on the concept of a unifying identity may suppress important dialogue about race; Oyakawa points out that rhetoric emphasizing “Christian identity over racial identity” has contributed to widespread acceptance among evangelicals of an individualistic racial reconciliation framework that downplays systemic forms of injustice.[30] This rhetorical framework uses Christian unity to sweep aside race issues by presenting “conversations about racial inequality as political and divisive” and arguing that “these conversations should be avoided to preserve unity in the church.”[31] Elements of these rhetorical approaches to theology and race are present in Bethlehem’s sermons about George Floyd.

As I noted in Chapter 1, pastoral discourse supplies evangelicals with interpretive guidance regarding how to apply theological concepts like the atonement to their lives as they grapple with social issues like race. I argue that metaphors, including space and mobility metaphors, play a crucial mediating role in that rhetorical process. This analysis investigates how metaphors within theological discourse guide auditors to interpret theologies like the atonement into either an impetus for participation in racial justice reform or into a reason to dismiss calls for racial justice as an unspiritual concern. Though these sermons share certain theological commonalities, the metaphoric language and constitutive work performed in each pastor’s sermon varies greatly. This analysis therefore tackles each sermon individually, beginning with Meyer’s sermon.

Metaphoric Clusters in Meyer’s Sermon

Jason Meyer’s May 31 sermon uses the Old Testament narrative of Job as a metaphor for the crisis in the Twin Cities. The Book of Job begins with God permitting Satan to deprive the

titular patriarch of his prosperity, children, and health, but the narrative reveals that Job's suffering is not a punishment for sin on Job's part or a judgment from God but rather a demonstration of Job's faith.[32] In the text, God describes Job as "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil."[33] The text's emphasis on Job's innocence is crucial to Meyer's metaphor. Meyer narrates how Job's friends initially attempted to comfort him after the calamities. The movement of Job's friends towards him in his time of suffering forms a key mobility metaphor within the sermon for engagement with victims of abuse, but the subsequent actions of Job's friends also serve Meyer as a negative example. The remainder of the book shifts into a "poetic dialogue" in which Job responds to accusations that his friends voice after they conclude that Job's suffering must be the result of sin.[34] Job then asks God to reveal the purpose for his suffering and receives God's answer: that the reasons for human suffering transcend human scrutiny. Evangelical theologian R.C. Sproul provides a typical evangelical interpretation of the book's meaning, arguing that it addresses the problem of human suffering with a reminder that true wisdom is found in "awe and reverence before God" rather than in looking for "specific answers to specific questions" about the reasons for the difficulties of life.[35] Meyer's message offers three main points that align with that typical interpretation. He describes these points as "three steps that are silent, but speak volumes," consisting of "see the evil" by recognizing the spiritual battle behind the events each person's life, "show sympathy" by actively seeking out and weeping with those who suffer, and "sit in solidarity" by standing up for those who suffer.[36] I argue that Meyer's metaphoric rhetoric offers congregants a subjectivity that reflects a Social Gospel orientation towards race issues by deploying clusters of metaphors that condemn racialized violence, call for solidarity with rather than judgment of victims, and invite introspection from congregants about complicity in systemic injustice.

Meyer's Job Metaphors

Meyer's May 31, 2020 sermon, delivered just days after George Floyd's death, uses a cluster of metaphors based on Job's suffering and the silent sympathy shown by his friends in Job 2:11-13 to provide congregants with guidance for how to respond to the unfolding racial crisis. Meyer begins his sermon by reading the passage and telling his audience that he wants to "cut to the chase" and give them the answer to the question posed by the sermon's title, "What to Say When Suffering is Great." He says that the answer is "nothing," and then quotes verse thirteen: "And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great."[37] The remainder of the sermon expands upon each of Meyer's three main points with clusters of metaphors pertaining to silence and suffering, Christ's body and blood, spiritual warfare, and navigation.

Silence and Suffering Metaphors

First, Meyer uses the Job narrative as a metaphor for how congregants should respond to George Floyd's death and similar incidents of racialized police brutality. Meyer's metaphor places victims of racial injustice in the position of Job and uses the silent sympathy shown by Job's friends as a metaphor for how auditors should respond to the suffering caused by racial injustice. He tells his listeners that their response to fully seeing the evils of racial injustice should be to act upon what they see by sitting in solidarity with its victims. Drawing up verse 13, Meyer states that Job's friends

> 'sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.' Sympathy here is more than words. It is fundamentally an action—an acted out parable that makes the point with one's whole body and one's whole posture: sit with the sufferer.[38]

Meyer's treatment of this metaphor of posture suggests that the suffering in the Twin Cities requires something more than words, a type action that involves bodily movement towards and presence with those who are suffering. Though terms like "seeing" and "sitting" might suggest a static response, Meyer states that the silence of Job's friends "does not mean they did nothing" but rather was "a certain kind of silence" that "spoke volumes."[39] As a whole, this metaphoric language draws a distinction between forms of response to suffering that involve merely saying the right thing and forms of engagement that entail presence and demonstrations of sympathy.

Meyer also adds an emotional component to the subjectivity that he offers to congregants. He states that the sympathy shown by Job's friends was

> not passive, but active. They made an appointment to come and show Job sympathy and bring him comfort. But this show of sympathy was not a show, not a sham. This was a deep emotional engagement. This was a 'weep with those who weep' moment.[40]

He then adds that upon seeing him from a distance, Job's friends "raised their voices and wept" and "tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads."[41] Nothing in the sermon suggests that Meyer intends for his audience to literally tear their clothes or put dust on themselves. Rather, this illustration of sorrow asks congregants to demonstrate emotion in tangible ways. Meyer provides an example of this type of engagement by describing his own experience at a racial justice protest:

> Have you ever attended a protest rally for an African-American like George Floyd or Ahmaud Arbery? Here is what I have witnessed now a few different heartbreaking times. I have tried to just sit in solidarity and listen and weep. You know what the main message is? 'We matter. We have value. It is not right to be treated this way.' Isn't that heartbreaking? Do you know what they are doing? They are trying to tell themselves—within their community to each other—that they have worth.[42]

Meyer's metaphors, paired with this illustration, invite congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that seeks out those who are suffering to listen to their message and demonstrate support. In contrast to Stokes's sermon, which emphasizes the importance of making the appropriate pronouncements regarding racial injustice, Meyer's metaphor invites auditors to adopt a subjectivity that sees injustice as a call to proximity and engagement. This subjectivity also refrains from rendering premature judgments.

Meyer builds upon his use of Job as a metaphor for victims of racial injustice to offer the congregation a subjectivity that prioritizes listening to victims rather than making judgments about their potential complicity in their own suffering. Meyer emphasizes Job's innocence in God's eyes, stating that Job "did not sin or charge God with wrong."[43] By emphasizing the point within the context of a sermon about George Floyd, Meyer suggests that Floyd, like Job, may have been innocent of any wrongdoing that would merit his suffering. After explaining how Job's friends first reacted to seeing him, Meyer adds,

> Showing sympathy first means joining the tears, not judging the tears. Oh, there will be a time for interpretation. That will come. But not now. We will find out later that they viewed him as a sinner, but they approached the sufferer first as a sufferer. Participation in tears comes before parsing out the tears. It means weeping with those who weep rather than first wondering whether they should really be weeping.[44]

This language suggests that there is a proper order to the actions one takes when responding to suffering and that initially, as suffering becomes visible, the first response should be emotional engagement and demonstration of solidarity rather than judgment. Meyer does not rule out the possibility of judgment in the future, but his language suggests that sorrow is always the appropriate first response of congregants to a death like George Floyd's.

Meyer's treatment of the Job narrative also warns congregants that rushing to judgment risks provoking anger from God. He notes that Job's friends were correct when they viewed Job "first as a sufferer" and not the one to blame for his suffering. This move is particularly significant in the context of discourse about George Floyd, much of which centered upon whether his criminal record, alleged substance abuse, or interactions with the police in the minutes leading up to his death meant that he somehow contributed to or "deserved" what happened to him.[45] Instead of scrutinizing Floyd's actions, Meyer scrutinizes those who leap to judgments of suffering:

> I am afraid we can be like Job's friends here in the wrong way. Job's friends blew it when they began to offer their interpretations of Job's suffering. Their bottom line answer was that Job had done something to deserve the suffering he endured. They even tried to use their theology to put Job in his place: 'You deserve what is happening to you.' But they were wrong. God arranged it where they needed to make a sacrifice because the Lord's anger burned against them.[46]

This language asks congregants to consider that their judgments of George Floyd, like the accusations voiced by Job's friends once they abandoned their initial demonstrations of sympathy, might likewise prove incorrect in the final analysis and bring about God's displeasure. He emphasizes God's anger with theological accusations, noting that Job's friends had to make sacrifices and have Job pray for them before God would forgive their false accusations.[47] This language invites congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that views victim-blaming responses to racialized violence as sinful. Body metaphors in Meyer's sermon also lend theological weight to the cause of racial equality.

Body Metaphors

Meyer uses a biblical metaphor that figures the church as the body of Christ to offer a theological rationale for racial solidarity. Evangelical rhetoric based on crucicentric theology

typically elevates the importance of individual salvation over questions of social justice.[48] However, Meyer reminds congregants that many of those who are protesting for racial justice are fellow Christians and paraphrases their message with a theological metaphor:

> Have you listened to them? Not just some in our church but in the broader church who would identify with you as your brother or sister in Christ. Here is what they are saying—I am going to try to help you sit in solidarity with them. They are suffering and saying, 'we are all out of words. We are so tired. We have tried and tried to explain our experience, to share our pain so you can feel our pain. But you say that you do not get it or are not convinced—so we have to keep somehow justifying what we think and feel, indeed, to get you to somehow believe us so that you can begin to feel it with us. We don't want it to be us vs. you. We want it to be 'us'—the body of Christ us. When one member of the body weeps, the whole body weeps. We want that. We have tried to get you to get it. And now this video.'

This language presents the message of racial justice protestors through a biblical metaphor that envisions every believer as a "member" or part of Christ's body. In contrast to messages like the ones that I analyzed in Chapter 2 that present evangelicals as victims of the racial crisis, Meyer uses the body of Christ metaphor enfold those victimized by and protesting against racial injustice into the church.[49] The implication is that congregants who ignore this message are denying an important spiritual reality and failing to live in righteous unity with fellow believers. Those who reject this cry for justice are dividing from the body of Christ when they should be weeping with it. This metaphor invites congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that is unified with those experiencing and protesting against racial injustice.

Furthermore, Meyer uses assault and blood metaphors to offer auditors a theological rationale for racial solidarity based on evangelical teachings about the value of human life. He begins by stating that

> Bethlehem should be and can be that place where that solidarity can take place because we so clearly teach the sacred value of human life. We should be quick to stand up and say, 'Your life matters. You have value. You are made in God's image.' Racism is an offense to God—like a slap in the face to his worth. Racism is an assault on the image of God.[50]

Congregants in conservative evangelical churches like Bethlehem are likely familiar with rhetoric that uses notions of human life being sacred and of human beings bearing God's image as warrants for an anti-abortion stance, but here Meyer uses "the sacred value of human life" as a warrant for racial equality. In doing so, he clashes with a statement that Bethlehem's elders would later release in February of 2021 telling members that they have a "clear biblical command" to stand against abortion but are free to follow their "differently calibrated consciences" when it comes to what they euphemistically describe as "accounting for ethnic disparities."[51] Unlike that statement, Meyer's language links the value that evangelicals place on human life as sacred to the racially marginalized. By implication, evangelicals who fail to stand against racism are being inconsistent with their pro-life position. Meyer then specifically connects his assault metaphor to Christ's shed blood, stating that the "ultimate reason" that Christians must pursue racial solidarity is "because we cherish the infinite value of Christ's life. We were not only created equal by God, [but also] washed clean by the blood of the Lamb, and made new by the Holy Spirit."[52] This statement suggests that complicity in racism is not only an assault on God's image but also an affront to God's creation of humanity and a denial of the atonement. While the language of having been "washed clean" and "made new" allude to conversion, the reference to being "*created* equal by God" suggests that the principles of equality and sacred value apply regardless of whether those involved are insiders or outsiders to the faith. In the subjectivity that Meyer offers to Bethlehem, evangelical theology is a warrant for valuing

racially marginalized lives. Another metaphor in Meyer's sermon asks the congregation to reject individualistic explanations of racial inequity.

Spiritual Warfare Metaphors

Meyer uses a metaphor of spiritual warfare to invite the congregation to interpret the chaotic situation in the Twin Cities from a social perspective rather than an individualistic one. He tells congregants that

> there is usually a spiritual battle behind whatever you see on Twitter or on the news. There are schemes of Satan at work. Consider Ephesians 6:10–12. 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.'[53]

Here Meyer deploys a spatial metaphor envisions an unseen spiritual realm that contains supernatural agents operating behind the material realities of the racial crisis that are visible to congregants. Rather than framing the congregation an invading force as the pastors who I analyzed in Chapter 2 did, this metaphoric portrayal of a larger spiritual reality behind what congregants see around them invites them to accept a more nuanced alternative to evangelicalism's typically individualistic explanations of racism. Emerson and Smith note that evangelical theological perspectives on sin often lead them to attribute the "true race problem" to individual attitudes.[54] Meyer's language challenges that view by suggesting that the unfolding crisis cannot be reduced to a matter of individual attitudes that need to be corrected. Instead, his references to a spiritual battle and schemes of Satan suggest that there are enemies and structures that require collective opposition.

Meyer further illustrates the systemic dimension of racism later in the sermon by deploying the metaphor of a stacked deck. He states that people in the African American community are asking,

> 'Will we be believed this time?' Will people see and lament a broken system, or will they be sad about an isolated incident? So in this crushing grief, there is a crucial question. Do we believe them? Is the system broken? Is there racism and injustice at work here? Is the deck stacked against them?[55]

Meyer has already provided an answer with his spiritual diagnosis: the system is broken and the deck is stacked by the spiritual entities and "schemes of Satan" that Ephesians calls Christians to oppose. By shifting the field of "battle" from the material realm to the spiritual realm, this metaphor could risk implying to congregants that spiritual practices, rather than practical involvement in social reform efforts, are the best means of combatting injustice. However, this metaphor also performs a reformative constitutive function by challenging congregants who may be accustomed to individualistic thinking about racism a theological rationale for adopting a perspective that recognizes the systemic dimension of racism. This metaphor of spiritual warfare also plays a role in the sermons that I analyze in Chapter 4, so I devote more attention to its implications there. Additional metaphors in Meyer's sermon prompt the congregation to further challenge their perspectives.

Navigation, Vision, and Time Metaphors

Meyer's sermon contains a cluster of metaphors pertaining to navigation, vision, and time that invite the congregation to morally reorient itself within the racial crisis. These metaphors mediate evangelical theology's conversionistic emphasis on living a holy lifestyle into moral guidance that makes it imperative for evangelicals to stand against racial injustice. The first of these metaphors uses the image of a "moral compass" to invite the congregation to adjust their

sensitivities in response to the moral complexities of the crisis. He first deploys this metaphor with a proposition that his congregants are likely to accept:

> If watching people steal and destroy what does not belong to them seems okay to you, then your moral compass is broken. When a parent has a son for a police officer or a woman has a husband for a police officer, and they fear that they may not come back alive because of these riots—and you don't ache with them—then your moral compass is broken.[56]

After introducing the image of a moral compass and aligning it with these propositions that a conservative evangelical congregation is likely to agree with, Meyer challenges his audience to shift their perspective by adopting moral compasses that are also sensitive to the nuances of the racial crisis:

> But I think we all agree on some of those basic points. As I look at our church, I am praying for the discernment it takes to have a moral compass that can oppose rioting (not protesting) without forgetting and ignoring the evil that sparked the rioting. One of my major concerns in this moment is that we will find it relatively easy to speak up about the evils of rioting—but not the evil of racism.

This language configures the "evil of racism" as the underlying cause of the "evils of rioting" that may be more obvious to congregants because of the unrest around them. The larger implication of this metaphor is that those who fail to acknowledge that underlying evil have moral compasses that are just as broken as if they were callous to the fears and concerns of police officers and their family members.

Pairing his navigational metaphor with a vision metaphor, Meyer presents the video of George Floyd's death as a moral eye test. He paraphrases the message of protestors once more:

> They are saying, 'We don't need the video. We have lived this. We have tried to tell you that this happens to us. The videos are for you. It is not as if we just started being treated with brutality—it is that there are videos now. If you don't

> get it after this video, which is so obvious, like the 'Big E' on the moral eye exam chart, then we do not know what it will take.'[57]

This vision metaphor presents that the evil of Floyd's death as so obvious that someone who fails to see it as unjust is totally morally blind, but the way that Meyer frames this metaphor also suggests that Floyd's death is not an exceptional as a case of racist brutality. Rather, the statements of "we have lived this" and "we have tried to tell you that this happens to us" suggest that Floyd's death is a typical example of racism that is only exceptional in that it was documented in a way that made the racism harder to deny. Taken together, Meyer's compass and vision metaphors invite congregants to navigate the crisis in the Twin Cities with an adjusted set of moral sensitivities that cannot rationalize away the brutality inflicted upon Floyd. To live righteously, congregants must acknowledge the evil of racism.

Meyer also uses figurative language to portray Floyd's death as an undeniable indicator of systematic racism's persistence in America. He says that while some people may find it easy to dismiss the video as a single incident of wrongdoing, "African-Americans look at that video and say: 'That is our story.' That triggers so much in us because that has been our story for the last four hundred years in this country (slavery, segregation, and all kinds of oppression)."[58] He then contrasts Floyd's death with cases in which officers make "split-second decisions" about use of deadly force: "we are not talking about seconds. We are talking about minutes, which felt like an eternity. He was handcuffed. He was immobilized. In any of those 400 seconds the officer could have removed his knee from George Floyd's neck."[59] Meyer adds that Chauvin used force "for the purpose of inflicting harm in the face of all the pleading to stop."[60] This line of argument uses the four hundred seconds of immobilizing suffocation inflicted upon Floyd as a metonymic symbol of four hundred years of immobilizing racial oppression in America. By emphasizing the duration of Floyd's suffocation and Chauvin's malicious intent, Meyer puts

forward Floyd's death as a case of racial injustice that is so overt that it demonstrates that a pattern of racial oppression that has existed for four-hundred years is still present in American society. He then challenges congregants to view the chaotic week they have experienced in light of that history, saying "if you are struggling with four days of rioting, imagine how little you would like four hundred years of systemic oppression."[61] This temporal reframing of the week's events challenges what Houdek describes as "White temporal rhetorics" that sustain a hegemonic sense of time by framing racist atrocities as a linear sequence of isolated events.[62] Instead, Meyer invites White congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that reads Floyd's death as *yet another* incident in a four-hundred year legacy of Black suffering. Next, Meyer addresses how evangelicals have responded to that legacy.

Meyer concludes the section that contains his vision, navigation, and time metaphors with language that connects them and then challenges evangelicals to consider their own complicity in racial oppression. He critiques evangelicals for "slowness to see the evils, show sympathy, and sit in solidarity," and "slowness to stand up for one another and speak up for one another in gospel solidarity."[63] Moving beyond the issue of merely recognizing the evils of racism, Meyer goes a step further by addressing the question of complicity:

> And that brings the most heart-breaking question of all: 'Are the horrifying events depicted in this video part of the lack of solidarity and cost of silence—and thus the cost of complicity?' I was not put on this planet to punk out now and duck this question. I own it. The answer is 'yes.' I am complicit in not speaking out.

The implication is that congregants who fail to engage in similar soul searching are ducking a crucial question and participating in a form of silence that is both unrighteous and costly to victims of injustice. By answering "yes," Meyer invites the congregation to reevaluate their own

actions and make the same moral adjustment. His concluding calls to action build upon this shift in perspective.

Meyer concludes his sermon with calls to action grounded in the temporally altered subjectivity that he has invited congregants to inhabit. He explains that Job's friends "sat with him for seven days because his suffering was great" and asks the congregation how long they should "sit with someone who has a story of oppression that goes back four hundred years."[64] Rather than commending a static approach, he uses mobile language to explain that to truly "sit" in solidarity with the Black community in their suffering like Job's friends means to "stand up and speak up against" racism.[65] Though Meyer is not specific about exactly how congregants should "stand up and speak up," those who accept this subjectivity cannot be content with passivity. His aforementioned references to attending racial justice protests and listening to the message of protestors offer a starting point for those who respond to his call.

Overall, Meyer's sermon weaves together a cluster of metaphors that challenges evangelical thinking about race, inviting listeners to inhabit a subjectivity influenced by a Social Gospel perspective that sees the complex evils of racial injustice and moves towards its victims in solidarity. Though his sermon retains the crucicentric and conversionistic emphases on personal salvation and righteous living that are typical of evangelical theological rhetoric, his metaphors weave a Social Gospel orientation towards the pursuit of present-day justice into that theology. The racial solidarity that he calls for is predicated on a shift towards a subjectivity characterized by compassionate empathy for the suffering of the racially marginalized and opposition to the persistence of systemic racism in America. The constitutive work performed by the next two sermons at Bethlehem would push in the opposite direction.

Metaphoric Clusters in Zuleger's Sermon

Dave Zuleger's June 7 sermon, entitled "Where to Look When Suffering is Great," draws upon Hebrews 12 and is structured around the main points of "look back at witnesses, look up to Jesus, and look inside ourselves."[66] An unknown author's epistle to Jewish converts to Christianity, the New Testament book of Hebrews provides a theological treatment of "the new covenant inaugurated by Christ's death" that parallels themes in Paul's epistles to Gentile converts.[67] Chapter 12 uses a footrace metaphor that characterizes the Christian life as a test of spiritual endurance.[68] Zuleger brings this metaphor into his sermon when he quotes from Hebrews 12:1-2 in its opening lines:

> Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.[69]

This footrace also forms the central metaphor for Zuleger's sermon. John Piper, popular evangelical theologian and former Bethlehem pastor, writes that Hebrews 12:2 teaches Christians to embrace "costly obedience" to Christ by imitating his example of suffering without retaliation because of the promise of a joyous heavenly future with God.[70] This future promise is a key component of Zuleger's sermon. As the racial crisis unfolds in the Twin Cities, Zuleger asks racial minority congregants to cast aside the burdensome "weight" of "proving" their experiences of racial injustice and "run the race" while looking forward to a time when people of all races stand together before God's throne.[71]

Zuleger's Race Metaphors

Zuleger's sermon constructs a cluster of metaphors that invites congregants to inhabit a forward-looking subjectivity that can ignore the racial crisis in the present in light of a

comforting promise of a coming post-racial future. Post-racism refers to an approach to race issues that discourages productive dialogue about racism by treating it as a closed issue. As Ohl and Potter explain, post-racial rhetoric attempts to remove "any need to interrogate race" in American life and works to absolve White Americans of the responsibility to address systemic injustice.[72] Where Social Gospel messages seek to transform society for a better future, post-racial rhetoric "props up nationalist myths and creates barriers to racial justice" by arguing that racial injustice is a thing of the distant past.[73] Though Zuleger's sermon acknowledges the existence of racial injustice in the present and is therefore not post-racial in the traditional sense of the term, the sermon invites congregants to view present-day racial injustice as irrelevant because all racial suffering will one day be rewarded by God and because Christ is bringing about a future in which racism will no longer exist. In that sense, the sermon uses a vision of a post-racial future as the premise for how congregants should think about and act, or not act, in response to the existence of racism in the present. Congregants can ignore the racial crisis around them in light of a promised post-racial future that Christ, not secular social engagement, is bringing about.

Zuleger begins by commenting that his sermon is designed to "process all the brokenness and suffering" caused by Floyd's death and adds that "none of us would have chosen this race that 2020 has brought us—but we don't get to choose. God sets the race before us, and we have to believe that it is for our good as a church.[74] He says that in "the race of 2020 – with pandemics, unjust killings, and riots," congregants need to "endure" to "do the will of God and receive the promised reward."[75] Zuleger later offers congregants a picture of that reward: "Jesus has run the perfect race and endured the cross for the joy of a purchased people from every nation, tribe, people, and language—with every color of skin—to stand before his throne in the

white-hot joy of worship."[76] Zuleger's metaphoric language invites congregants to envision themselves as runners and view the racial crisis in the Twin Cities as an endurance race that is both an obligation from God and an opportunity to strive forward on a path of faith that leads to the divine reward that lies at the finish line: a post-racial society, ruled by Christ, in heaven. This and several other metaphors in the sermon have constitutive implications.

Cloud of Witnesses

Zuleger's treatment of a "cloud of witnesses" metaphor offers congregants a subjectivity infused with eschatological pessimism, the view that society is broken in a way that only Christ's apocalyptic return at the end of time will fix.[77] He explains that Hebrews 12:1's reference to a "great cloud of witnesses" points back to Chapter 11, a passage that discusses heroic figures of faith in the Old Testament. Zuleger states that the "witnesses" who died for their faith had a "desire for a better country, that is, a heavenly one" and that God has "prepared for them a city."[78] He rules out hope for present-day reform by contrasting that "holy city" to a "world that is broken" and "cannot be our hope or our home."[79] Rather than calling for earthly reform, Zuleger warns congregants that to have hope for this world is to "buy into the broken systems of this world."[80] This offers evangelicals an eschatologically pessimistic perspective in which a desire for systemic reform is futile and in opposition to their faith; those who hope for a better world today have misplaced their hope in a broken world rather than placing their faith in the future city promised by God.

Elaborating upon his metaphor, Zuleger also uses the "cloud of witnesses" mentioned in the passage as a catch-all category to represent victims of all kinds of oppression. He concludes that the suffering of this cloud, which includes the Black church, should motivate the evangelical church to continue its metaphoric endurance race. Zuleger describes the witnesses as Christians

who have historically been victims of religious persecution as well as the "Black church which has endured in our own nation through hundreds of years of oppression."[81] Asking what role those witnesses play, he states that it is "to encourage us that God is faithful to keep his people when times are really hard."[82] By treating historical racial oppression as a reminder of God's "faithfulness" rather than reason to pursue change, this language aligns with active-passivism's emphasis on staying the course and trusting God with the outcome. Zuleger's language also invites evangelicals to view themselves as victims within the context of the racial crisis. Though he nods to the privilege enjoyed by evangelicals in comparison to the Black church, he then reminds his listeners that life for them is "still broken" and that "unjust killings happen" and "cities burn."[83] Presented with language that blends pessimism about social change with an emphasis on leaving those issues in God's hands, Zuleger's witness category also frames present-day racial oppression as a motivation for evangelicals to stay their present course.

Zuleger's treatment of the witness concept also smooths over the immobilizing nature of racial oppression by problematically conflating various categories of suffering. As he elaborates on what the "cloud of witnesses" means for congregants today, he blurs distinctions between religious and racial oppression by lumping together the race-based oppression experienced by "minority brothers and sisters" in the Black church, the religious persecution experienced by the "saints of old," and the victimization that contemporary evangelicals ascribe to being "treated differently" for their faith:

> We learn from the saints of old—and from our minority brothers and sisters now and from the underground church—that this promised future city is enough, even when we don't feel we belong and [are] treated differently for it. These people of God are sustained by doing simple math. Better to suffer for ninety years here for the sake of Christ and to be identified with him and receive his inheritance forever

> than to have all the comfort and convenience this life can offer now and be separated from God forever.[84]

Zuleger's description of how all of "these people of God" do the "simple math" suggests that victims of race-based oppression and victims of religious oppression made the same calculated choice to reject "comfort and convenience" to receive a reward from God. By retroactively attributing both choice and religious motive to victims of racial oppression, this language smooths over the ways in which racial oppressors use immobilizing force to deny agency to victims who would have undoubtedly preferred to choose another fate. It also suggests that the evangelical feelings of discomfort, victimhood, and alienation that culture war rhetoric attributes to secular society's purported hatred of Christianity are of a kind with the historical oppression inflicted on racial minorities. Such rhetoric equips evangelicals to feel that they are the true victims of social injustice, even when a brutal death like George Floyd's suggests otherwise. Consequently, there is no need for special empathy for victims of racial injustice and no need to become socially engaged in pursuing a solution. Evangelicals can accept a subjectivity that views all forms of suffering as a spiritual and individual phenomenon that entails reward from God.

Zuleger further compounds his conflation of racial oppression and religious oppression when he then uses Moses, one of the heroic figures mentioned in Hebrews 11, and his decision to "be associated with the oppressed" Hebrew slaves to whom he was born rather than with his "privileged" adoptive family of Egyptian royals as a representation of his homogenized category of victims of persecution.[85] Unlike Moses, however, the "minority brothers and sisters" who were victims of racial oppression likely never had the choice to be counted among the privileged rather than standing with oppressed. By attributing choice and religious hope for a future reward to victims of racial oppression, Zuleger's language "filters out" the need to pursue racial justice today.[86] His metaphoric treatment of these passages offers evangelicals a comforting but myopic

perspective that allows them to treat racial injustice not as a harmful social ill that requires their active intervention, but rather as an opportunity for members of racial minority groups to willingly endure suffering for the sake of reward.[87] From this perspective, to combat racial oppression would be to deprive victims of that reward. Other metaphors in this sermon further discourage evangelicals from addressing racial injustice.

Racing and Resting

Zuleger mixes a static image of rest into the image of physical exertion entailed by his footrace metaphor, offering congregants a static and comforting subjectivity that views the racial crisis as an invitation to restful post-racial assurance in their individual salvation rather than a call to urgent social action. While the metaphor of a footrace suggests that the individual racer must persevere to reach the finish line, Zuleger's language presents a mixed metaphor that blends running and resting. Zuleger argues that his listeners should spend most of their time looking to Jesus:

> Jesus went before us to purchase us and unite us to his death and resurrection by faith. And Jesus is the one keeping us, perfecting us, and who will bring our faith to fulfillment at the end of the race. What a resting place it is to know that in the midst of 2020 with a pandemic, racial injustice, and all the normal suffering of disease and death, we're going to make it because Jesus started our race and Jesus will be sure we complete it.[88]

The mention of being united to Christ's death alludes to the theology of the atonement, the notion that Christ's sacrifice provides for the personal salvation of believers from their sins. However, Zuleger's mixed metaphor expands the implications of that personal salvation to include a "resting place" from the suffering caused by the "race" of 2020. Zuleger's description of Jesus making sure that auditors complete that race may call to mind dramatic narratives and images of runners carrying fallen competitors across the finish line. Similar to Timberlake's

treatment of the innkeeper role that I analyzed in Chapter 2, this metaphor suggests that human efforts to navigate crises are at least prone to failure if not fruitless altogether; Jesus will ultimately carry the stumbling congregant across the divine finish line. Furthermore, the language of rest suggests that the expenditure of effort on responding to the crisis is unnecessary; Christ handles all of the work through his death and resurrection in the past, through his ongoing "keeping" and "perfecting" in the present, and through his future aid in making sure that auditors finish the race. Zuleger's mixed metaphors invite his listeners to inhabit a subjectivity characterized by restful assurance that the racial tensions in the Twin Cities can be safely ignored because Jesus will finish the race. Nevertheless, a reward still awaits at the finish line.

As a finish line, Zuleger's footrace metaphor offers congregants a vision of a post-racial future around God's heavenly throne in which racial divisions will no longer matter. Rather than appealing to a post-racial vision of the past to excuse racism in the present, Zuleger offers congregants a mythic vision of a post-racial future in a "better country, that is, a heavenly one" that has already been secured by Christ's atonement.[89] He quotes from Revelation 7:9-10, which describes "a great multitude" from "all tribes and peoples and languages" standing before God's throne in heaven and praising him.[90] Zuleger premises this vision of the future on the theology of the atonement with the aforementioned language stating that Jesus "has run the perfect race" for "the joy of a purchased people" from every "nation, tribe, people, and language—with every color of skin."[91] In Chapter 1, I analyzed how Peter Haas's Jericho sermons situated congregants within an already-completed narrative that moved towards a conclusion of violence. In this case, Zuleger's footrace metaphor positions the congregation as soon-to-be inhabitants of a post-racial paradise where racial harmony is assured. Rather than taking concrete steps to achieve racial justice in the country that they inhabit today, congregants need only to stay the course while

looking forward to this "better country," a "paradise of all peoples" achieved through Christ's work rather than their own.[92] The introduction of a metaphor of weight reinforces the notion of staying the course.

Weight

A metaphor of weight in Zuleger's sermon mediates conversionistic theology into an invitation to White congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that lays aside feelings of guilt or responsibility for racial injustice. This metaphor also frames racial minority congregants as burdens to the church. Zuleger argues that the notion of "weight" as described in Hebrews 12:1 is like a runner trying to "run with a backpack of rocks."[93] Though he initially characterizes these weights as "things that aren't necessarily sin" but can "keep you from looking to Jesus," he later describes them using the language of sin by asking congregants when they are "tempted" by these weights to look away from Jesus.[94] In addition to warning congregants about the "temptations" of fretting over COVID-19 information and fixating on social media, Zuleger warns the "majority culture person" in the audience, a term that I read as a euphemistic reference to White congregants, that "feeling guilty" for "your ethnicity and for not understanding the struggle of minority brothers and sisters" is unproductive and will only lead to "defensiveness and shame."[95] He then addresses the "minority brother or sister" in the audience who "must have wondered for a while if we even care about the painful experiences you live out."[96] He says that while he is "praying we will do better," a phrase that seems to refer to himself and other White congregants, he also wants the minority individual to "lay down the weight of trying to prove your story" because "Jesus sees you" and "knows what it is to be mistreated."[97] This weight metaphor shapes conversionistic theology into an invitation to White congregants to inhabit a subjectivity that rejects feelings of guilt or remorse about complicity in racial injustice as a sinful

"temptation" that distracts from a focus on Christ. Though Zuleger later critiques prejudicial attitudes, the instruction to "lay aside" guilt as a harmful and potentially sinful "weight" equips the congregation to eschew introspection about such attitudes.

Zuleger's weight metaphor also offers a debilitating subjectivity to congregants who have experienced racial injustice by framing the act of giving voice to those experiences as unproductive and sinful. Having asked racial minority congregants to "lay down the weight of trying to prove" the "painful experiences" of injustice that "they live out," he later states that there is no need for "earning or proving anything" because "the blood has already paid for your sins."[98] This language weaponizes atonement theology against racial minority congregants by suggesting that speaking up about racial injustice is a form of denial of the gospel message. His language treats voicing concerns about racial injustice as a sign of having given in to the sinful temptation to carry "rocks" rather than placing faith in Christ's atonement.[99] By the same token, It also suggests that attempting to "prove" those experiences by voicing concerns would hinder the White congregants who have been instructed to set aside feelings of guilt.[100] Though ostensibly seeking to unburden racial minority congregants and help them "link arms" with White congregants so that they can run the race together as a "blood-bought family," Zuleger's post-racial theological rhetoric quashes conversations about race by offering the congregation a subjectivity in which racial minority congregants silently carry the weight of their experiences of racial injustice on their own lest they hinder White congregants.[101]

As a whole, Zuleger's cluster of footrace-related metaphors constitutes a comforting but myopic subjectivity characterized by eschatological pessimism and a fixation on a promised future rather than attention to the racial crisis in the present. Through metaphor, the sermon presents crucicentric and conversionistic theology as reasons to refrain from engaging with

questions of racial justice. In the upcoming discussion section, I compare and contrast Zuleger's assurance-focused messaging with Meyer's Social Gospel-influenced messaging. However, Zuleger was not the only pastor at Bethlehem to offer congregants a problematic perspective on the racial crisis.

Metaphoric Clusters in Stokes's Sermon

Kenny Stokes's June 14 sermon, entitled "What to Do When Suffering is Great," is based on Matthew 5:43-48, a selection from the Gospel passage known as the Sermon on the Mount that deals with the notion of loving one's enemies.[102] Christ commands his followers to turn the other cheek in verse 39 and to love their enemies in verse 44.[103] Many biblical commentaries emphasize the ethnic, political, and religious conflicts of Christ's day and interpret his command as an expansion of the Old Testament commandment to love one's neighbor to include enemies who stand on the other side of those social conflicts.[104] Pastors at Bethlehem teach a different view that expands the category of enemy rather than the category of neighbor. In verse 46 of Matthew 5, Jesus asks, "if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?" In a 1995 sermon, theologian and former Bethlehem Pastor John Piper teaches that this phrase means that an enemy is "any one who doesn't love you" and argues that Christ's point is that you "don't stop loving because the person does things that offend you, or dishonor you, or hurt your feelings, or anger you" and more.[105] In a 2022 episode of his "Ask Pastor John" podcast in which he revisits that 1995 sermon, Piper answers a question about who the "enemies" are that the text is referring to by saying that the category includes not just those who actively oppose or harm you, but also "*anybody that crosses your path*."[106] Stokes applies this same line of reasoning when he preaches about the racial crisis. His

sermon uses the cultural hostilities described in the biblical passage as a metaphor for unrest in the Twin Cities and applies this same logic about who congregants should view, if not treat, as their enemies. This section explores the constitutive implications of this rhetorical move for the subjectivities offered to Bethlehem congregants.

Stokes's Enemy Metaphors

In his sermon, Stokes uses a cluster of metaphors that offers the congregation a status quo-supporting subjectivity for whom racial inequality is an accepted norm. This subjectivity acknowledges that racial injustice exists, but it dismisses agitation for racial reform as the act of an enemy, views religious pronouncements about race as a meaningful step towards achieving racial justice, and expects victims of racial injustice to give up their anger at injustice and reify the status quo by forgiving remorseless hate. He states that his purpose is to instruct "all – black, white, brown, and every ethnicity" to follow Christ's command to "love your enemies."[107] Using the cultural animosities addressed by Christ as a metaphor for the racial crisis, he argues that love is the proper response to any of several concerning emotions that his auditors might be feeling. These include anger over the "blatant racism" of Floyd's death, anger at having been "unjustly called 'a racist' because you are white," fear that the next victim of violence may be your loved one, fear over destruction in the community, and fear about "living in a racialized society" where positive change feels elusive.[108] A metaphor of familial resemblance in Stokes's sermon expands the category of enemy, then two "historic pictures" of forgiveness drawn from Christian race relations illustrate what it means to act out that metaphor.

Enemies

Stokes uses a metaphor of familial resemblance that mediates conversionistic theology into an invitation for the congregation to inhabit a subjectivity that is wary of racial others and

non-evangelicals as potential enemies. Stokes uses the resemblance of children to their parents as a metaphor for how congregants should approach the racial crisis, arguing that they should demonstrate that they "really are a child of God" by showing the "enemy-loving love of God."[109] This raises the issue of who congregants should view as their enemies.

Stokes's treatment of the concept of enemies invites congregants to perceive a division between their congregation and non-congregants in the community. Rather than interpreting Christ's command to imitate God's love as an expansion of the love for brothers in this passage or the love for neighbors that Christ commands in Mark 12:31, Stokes favors a binary scheme that classifies others as either loved ones or enemies.[110] Referring to Old Testament animosities between Israel and rival nations, he argues that the term "enemies" in the passage refers to anyone who is "hostile" to you, including anyone who "persecutes" you by engaging in either "individualized or systemic harassment or oppression."[111] He then argues that Christ "expands" the category of enemy to include anyone "who doesn't love you."[112] He adds,

> An enemy is someone who is not one of your friends or family members: 'And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?' Your 'enemy' in this case is someone outside of your family or outside your circle of friendships. Again, apart from grace, the most natural thing to do is to love your own— your own family, your own friends, your own circle, your own tribe, the people of your own persuasion. That's good, BUT when your love does not extend to others, you are treating the others as enemies.[113]

Though his ultimate point may be that his audience should treat others with love regardless of whether they share a bond, this expansive treatment of the concept of enemies primes auditors navigating the racial crisis to be wary of difference. Specifically, his reference to members of another "tribe" and people who are not "of your own persuasion" read as euphemistic references

to race within the sermon's topical context.[114] While congregants are to love those who this language configures as outsiders, that call to love is predicated on a pre-existing division between the congregation and those outsiders. This subjectivity equips congregants to dismiss outsiders who act in ways that do not meet with their approval, such by participating in protests or other challenges to the status quo, on the basis that they are simply acting as enemies. Linking his conclusions to atonement theology and his metaphor of familiar resemblance, he tells congregants that taking this approach is an implication of being "a blood-bought child of God."[115] Congregants who are upset by the actions of those around them can take comfort that they on the right side as children of God. Stokes also addresses forgiveness.

Historic Pictures of Racialized Forgiveness

Stokes uses what he describes as two "historic pictures from recent Christian history" to illustrate what it would mean for the congregation to act as children of God by engaging in forgiveness of their enemies in relation to racial injustice. He draws the first of these from the racial reconciliation rhetoric of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), the largest Protestant denomination in the United States. Stokes describes the "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation" that was delivered at the SBC's 150th anniversary in 1995 as a "a moment of historic repentance, of seeking forgiveness and reconciliation from a large historically white Christian denomination."[116] He quotes language from the resolution that voices an ongoing commitment to "repudiate historic acts" of racism and "eradicate racism in all its forms," and he describes the document as an example of "heeding Christ's wider call to love."[117] He also characterizes it as a meaningful step towards racial justice: "this is one step in the path of heeding Christ's wider call to love—transcending the historic racial barrier that made whites view and treat blacks as enemies."[118] While the language of the document itself is admirable, it hardly brought about the

transcendence that Stokes attributes to it. In the years following the resolution's passage, SBC leadership engaged in a harmful pattern of downplaying and ignoring race issues that made the 1995 resolution appear cosmetic in hindsight.[119] Racial reconciliation rhetoric that seeks forgiveness but subsequently downplays historical racism ultimately "preserves White dominance, even if that is not the conscious intent of those deploying it."[120] By using the SBC's racial reconciliation rhetoric as a metaphoric picture of what it means for White Christians to demonstrate Christlike love for their "enemies," Stokes invites auditors to adopt an expedient subjectivity that emphasizes saying the "right" things about race over consistent action towards meaningful change. Speaking against racial injustice is crucial, but, unlike Meyer's sermon and its emphasis on active demonstrations of solidarity, Stokes equips auditors to rest assured that they are taking meaningful steps towards "transcending" racial barriers as long as their church is making the appropriate pronouncements about race.

Stokes's second "historic picture" of Christian forgiveness places unreasonable and racially-coded expectations of forgiveness upon victims of racialized violence. Describing the concept of "racialized forgiveness," Pearl argues that "institutions with structural power" such as media outlets often situate victims of racialized violence and their family members in a "fantasy 'middle ground' of nonviolence and protest" from which they are expected to forego anger, forgive remorseless acts of White supremacy, and reify the status quo.[121] Expressions of surprise at "reasonable" and "well-spoken" calls for justice from Black rhetors reflect racist tropes that figure Black people as excessively angry rather than reasonably upset about experiences of racism.[122] These tropes work to deny Black people the "right to grieve" by asking them to "forgive and relinquish their anger, often in the absence of apology" and in cases where "the

people who committed the violence do not think they did anything wrong."[123] Stokes plays into these tropes with his second picture of forgiveness and with a metaphor of weight.

Stokes uses the forgiveness offered by family members of victims of the 2015 shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Church in Charleston, South Carolina as a picture of what it means for victims of racial injustice to imitate Christ's love for enemies. He characterizes this as a picture of forgiveness "from aggrieved people, who, like Christ, forgive the undeserving and resist vengeance, leaving that to the horrible wrath of God."[124] Notably, White supremacist murderer Dylann Roof neither asked for forgiveness nor expressed remorse, but rather wrote that he did "not regret" what he did, that it "felt good," and that it was "worth it."[125] Some of the family members of the slain congregants nevertheless made statements granting forgiveness to him. Stokes describes how some of these family members, including a pastor named Anthony Thompson who lost his wife in the shooting, received criticism on social media for offering forgiveness to Roof. Quoting Thompson's response to this criticism, Stokes says,

> I chose to forgive, knowing exactly the appalling significance of the incident—the heartache, the sadness, and the deep nagging loneliness of having my best friend and life companion so violently snatched away. I was not oversimplifying my difficult decision to forgive, to pardon Dylann of this horrific sin as my heavenly Father had shown His mercy to me, a sinner.[126]

Stokes's use of this quotation frames the decision to forgive as the theologically appropriate thing for a Christian who has received Christ's forgiveness to do for others. My goal is not to dispute whether family members of the Emanuel victims should have forgiven Roof or whether their forgiveness was theologically appropriate, but rather to problematize the way that Stokes uses their forgiveness to offer his congregation a subjectivity in which it is normal to expect those who have experienced racial oppression to respond with radical expressions of forgiveness

rather than anger and outrage. This aspect of Stokes rhetoric develops further as he introduces a metaphor of weight.

Stokes deploys a metaphor of weight that unevenly distributes the burdens of dealing with racial injustice on victims of racialized violence. Stokes deploys this metaphor within a quotation of Brian Ivie, a documentarian responding to a question about why he decided to make a film about the Emanuel shooting:

> When I go out and talk about the film, I'm not just talking about them forgiving him because they wanted to be emotionally free from him. I'm talking about a kind of love you rarely see. Their love for the shooter was a love that said, 'I will bear the full weight of the wrong,' which is the highest kind of love—a love for your enemy.[127]

The language of bearing the "full weight of the wrong" positions those who experience racial injustice as the sole party responsible for responding to it and dealing with its consequences. By deploying this borrowed metaphor of weight alongside his presentation of this kind of forgiveness as a theologically appropriate and Christlike response to racial injustice, this metaphor reifies the expectations of racialized forgiveness by expecting victims of racialized violence to swallow their anger and forgive remorseless acts of White supremacist hatred. Failure to do so becomes a failure to act as a child of God by loving your enemy. Evangelical teachings, including Bethlehem Baptist Church's statement of faith, require that a sinner express "contrition for one's sins" and seek forgiveness from God before receiving it, yet Stokes sees fit to place an even more supernal expectation on victims of racialized violence with a subjectivity that asks them to offer forgiveness where none has been sought.[128] Such a subjectivity ultimately reifies a status quo in which the persistence of White supremacist violence is rightly addressed by victims operating from a perspective of forgiveness rather than through the comprehensive involvement of victims *and others* in expressions of anger and outrage such as those entailed in

racial justice protests. By implication, those who express outrage at Floyd's death are not showing the kind of forgiveness required of a Christian but are rather behaving like enemies and outsiders to the faith.

Taken together, Stokes's metaphoric pictures of how Christians should seek and offer forgiveness in the context of racial justice issues offer the congregation a subjectivity that reifies a status quo of racial inequality. Stokes unevenly distributes the metaphoric weight that he associates with seeking and offering forgiveness for racism. Where the predominantly-White SBC has enjoyed a position of privilege that enables it to ask for forgiveness for its racist history and subsequently downplay the weight of that history in its official discourse, the family members of Emanuel victims bear the full weight of losing their loved ones to an unapologetic White supremacist. This theological argumentation offers auditors a subjectivity in which those who are complicit in racial injustice can ask for forgiveness without making a commitment to lasting change while victims of racial injustice must offer forgiveness even when none has been sought lest they fail in their religious obligation to imitate Christ.

Taken together, the cluster of metaphors in Stokes's sermon offers congregants a subjectivity that responds to the racial crisis with acceptance of the status quo. The metaphoric language in this sermon invites congregants to adopt a comforting and expedient subjectivity that can dismiss disruptions of the status quo or expressions of anger as enemy behavior, take assurance in being on God's side, feel that they are participating in a meaningful effort to address racism as long as their church makes appropriate pronouncements about the issue, and view the consequences of racial injustice as properly borne and forgiven by its victims. Such a subjectivity is likely to appeal to auditors who feel threatened by a disruption of the status quo and desire reassurance that they and their church are already doing the right thing. Like Zuleger's

sermon, Stokes's sermon asks little from White congregants other than that they hang in there. As with the preceding sermons, analysis of this sermon offers an opportunity to discuss how metaphors perform racially significant constitutive work while offering guidance to congregants amid a racial crisis.

Clashing Subjectivities

This analysis of a series of three sermons delivered at Bethlehem Baptist Church's main campus in the weeks following George Floyd's death reveals that the metaphoric clusters deployed within them offered congregants clashing subjectivities in relation to race issues. Bethlehem's sermons contained widely divergent guidance for navigating the racial crisis. All three sermons addressed living out the Christian faith's call to compassion in a time of widespread suffering, but the metaphoric language in each of the sermons mediated that theological content into widely divergent perspectives about *how* to act upon that call. Meyer's sermon used a metaphoric image of engagement with victims of suffering from the book of Job to invite the congregation to adopt a challenging, Social Gospel-oriented subjectivity that views evangelicalism's atonement theology as an impetus for deep empathy, understanding rather than judgment, contrite introspection, and participation in efforts to stand up against systemic injustice. In contrast, Zuleger's sermon used a footrace metaphor from the book of Hebrews to offer the congregation a comforting but myopic subjectivity that views the atonement as an invitation to restful assurance amid the crisis, presents experiencing racial injustice as a choice one makes to seek a reward from God, and looks ahead to a time when racism is no longer an issue. Along similar lines, Stokes's metaphor of familial resemblance and supporting pictures of Christian forgiveness offer the congregation a reassuring and expedient subjectivity in which

being a "blood-bought" child of God enables the rejection of challenges to the status quo as the actions of enemies, values pronouncements over engagement as a meaningful path towards lasting change, and expects victims of racial injustice to bear in entirety the weighty burdens of racialized forgiveness.

Given the conflicting nature of the subjectivities offered to the congregation at Bethlehem, the implications of the church's constitutive discourse are mixed. Congregants who embrace Meyer's message may be more likely to seek opportunities to become socially engaged in advocacy for racial justice or to meet the needs of marginalized neighbors, though his sermon could have provided more guidance about specific and practical ways to show the solidarity for which he calls. Meanwhile, those who adopt Zuleger's approach are likely to see advocacy efforts as a distraction from the church's restful "race" towards a comforting vision of the future, and those who embrace the subjectivity offered to them by Stokes will likely accept a status quo in which racial injustice is the norm. Someone who attempts to adopt a subjectivity that reconciles the guidance within all three of these messages is likely to be profoundly conflicted. As to which perspective prevailed within the congregation, the controversies that unfolded at the church in the following months seem telling. Analysis of these sermons offers several insights for rhetorical critics and scholars of evangelicalism into how metaphors within theological rhetoric shape subjectivities in relation to racial justice issues.

The divergent subjectivities offered to congregants in these sermons indicate that the metaphors present within textual theology may prompt auditors to interpret a church's theology in radically divergent ways. This appears to be especially true of race rhetoric. As a component of what Vining calls "textual theology," the textually observable level of theology that mediates theological traditions and pastors' individual theologies into interpretive guidance that auditors

use to navigate their lives, the metaphors within evangelical theological discourse are worthy of critical attention. Each sermon mediated core elements of evangelical theology such as the crucicentric theology of the atonement and the lifestyle theology of conversionism into guidance for congregants as they navigated the racial crisis, but that guidance varied greatly regarding whether congregants should become involved in social efforts to address it. Critics interested in understanding how theological argumentation influences how auditors respond to social issues should pay close attention to the metaphors present within theological arguments. Even rhetorically inelegant metaphors that read as mixed, strained, or ill-fitting to the situation at hand may convey interpretive guidance that mediates the theology that evangelical congregations derive from their commitment to an inerrant scripture into guidance that shapes how they respond to social issues like race.

In this case, mobility metaphors mediated the same theological concepts into widely divergent guidance about the degree of urgency and concern with which evangelicals should respond to racial injustice. Meyer suffuses his metaphoric language about Job's sympathetic friends with urgency and intentionality to invite congregants to view Christ's atonement as reason to repent of slowness to stand up for victims of racial injustice, while Zuleger's metaphoric language associates atonement theology with static images of rest that invite congregants to take a passive approach to the crisis out of assurance in a heavenly future. Where Zuleger asks racial minority congregants to lay down the weight of their experiences so that congregants can restfully run together towards a post-racial future, Meyer interprets Floyd's murder as a call to reflect upon at historic racial injustice, adjust moral perspectives, and condemn the immobilizing brutality of racialized police violence.[129] It was not statements articulating the theology of the atonement itself, but rather the space and mobility metaphors of

racing, resting, sitting, standing, looking, navigating, and more that accompanied the articulations of that theology that shaped the divergent guidance that these rhetors offered to auditors. At first glance, it might seem reasonable to expect that static metaphors orient congregants towards static responses to social issues while metaphors of motion invite meaningful engagement. However, the precise manner in which rhetors deploy that metaphoric language is deeply consequential. Meyer clarifies that his metaphor of sitting in solidarity means actively moving towards and standing up for victims. Zuleger deploys an endurance race metaphor, but the language of rest transforms that race into a call to passivity. As rhetorical critics analyze theological discourse, they must give careful attention not just to individual metaphors but also to metaphoric clusters that cohere together into structures of meaning that shape the interpretations of theology offered to auditors. Attention to static and mobile metaphors enhances metaphoric criticism's utility as a tool for this kind of critical work.

Additionally, this analysis reveals how the metaphors deployed within theological rhetoric accentuate eschatological perspectives that shape the subjectivities that religious auditors adopt in relation to social justice issues. Rather than focusing on a distant, heavenly future, Meyer's deployment of the body of Christ metaphor presents racism as a threat that must be addressed in the present. For Zuleger, to work for present-day change is to place futile hope in a broken world and inappropriately fixate on issues that are secondary to the Christian life. These examples again illustrate metaphor's crucial role within textual theology's mediation of theology into guidance; atonement theology and its attendant eschatology become either driving forces for positive action in the present or reasons to give up social reform depending on the metaphoric language used to present them to auditors. Metaphoric criticism provides scholars a productive avenue for critiquing the often-harmful influence of rhetorics that use eschatology to discourage

evangelicals from productive social engagement. There is no reason to believe that evangelicals will give up their eschatological beliefs any time soon. In the meantime, scholars can highlight theological rhetoric like Meyer's that advocates for present-day social action as a productive counterpoint to pessimistic interpretations of premillennial eschatology that condemn society to inevitable decline. Meyer's use of the four-hundred agonizing seconds in which George Floyd was killed as a metonym for four-hundred agonizing years of American racism poignantly demonstrates how figurative language might invite evangelical auditors to give much-needed attention to race in the past and present rather than fixating on the promise of a post-racial future. Rhetoric about the immobilizing complexities of racialized violence also merits critical attention.

This analysis also highlights how metaphors within evangelical theological discourse may smooth over the immobilizing nature of racialized violence, resulting in the production of subjectivities characterized by ignorance or acceptance of a racially unjust social status quo. With metaphors that lump victims of racial oppression and victims of religious oppression into one category of sufferers who have chosen to suffer to receive a reward from God, Zuleger's sermon smooths over the immobilizing nature of racialized violence and attributes to its victims the agency of which that violence strips them. Furthermore, presenting racial injustice as an opportunity for victims to nobly seek rewards from God undercuts the urgency of calls for racial justice. The inherent incongruity between vehicle and tenor gives metaphors their capacity to vividly illustrate, but the type of incongruity that results from inelegantly using a singular vehicle like "witnesses" to characterize a tenor consisting of complex and divergent categories of racial and religious persecution smooths over significant nuances within conversations about social justice. Language that clumsily lumps those categories together may lead contemporary evangelicals to mistake their perceptions of being "treated differently" because of their religious

views as an extension of historic forms of racial oppression, thereby providing fuel for culture war narratives that position evangelicals as the true victims of social ills. The need to critique such problematic incongruities and their implications is nothing new; however, this analysis demonstrates the urgent need for that critique within the context of evangelical theological rhetoric. Metaphoric language that uses religious imagery to smooth over the complexities of racial oppression performs troubling constitutive work, particularly in a faith tradition like evangelicalism that valorizes martyrdom.

This analysis also reveals how metaphors within theological rhetoric suppress much-needed discourse about race. Both Zuleger and Stokes use metaphors that work to shut down important conversations about racial injustice and offer auditors a perspective that accepts that injustice as the norm. In addition to presenting racial injustice as an opportunity to earn a reward from God, Zuleger presents racial grievances as a sinful weight that racial minority congregants must cast aside rather than sharing with others. This rhetoric frames the lived experiences of minority congregants as a potential burden to the White congregants with whom Zuleger calls them to link arms. This weight metaphor quashes racial dialogue by presenting efforts to seek resolution and reform as sinful. Just as questions of agency in relation to suffering racial injustice are likely more complex than Zuleger's metaphors make them out to be, actually dealing with the "weight" of those experiences may require giving congregants space for candid dialogue rather than asking them to discard their feelings about those experiences. Stokes's sermon also discourages victims of White supremacist violence from expressing anger and outrage at racism. Pulpit rhetoric that interprets biblical commandments into rationales for silence regarding an unjust status quo is unlikely to heal racial divisions within evangelicalism.

Finally, this analysis sheds additional light on how metaphors within theological discourse lay the groundwork for animosity between evangelicals and other publics, including between predominantly White evangelicals and racial minority community members. Stokes's sermon ultimately calls for loving one's enemies, but the sermon unnecessarily predicates that call on a division that makes it easy to dismiss the actions of community members as the actions of outsiders who are choosing to behave as enemies. Evangelicals have long engaged with texts that use metaphors that feed into cultural warfare and offer justifications for the mistreatment of "non-evangelical others."[130] This analysis reveals that even calls to love others may be couched in metaphoric language that reinforces divisions between evangelicals and other publics. Fortunately, analysis of Meyer's sermon also reveals how metaphors can, if more thoughtfully applied, provide rationales for seeking unity between evangelicals and other communities. Like Ivie's trickster, a rhetor who attempts to balance a "sharp edge" of critique with sufficient affirmation of a group's established ways of thinking in the process of using metaphors to invite an audience to adopt a shift in perspective, Meyer uses biblical metaphors and evangelical concepts like the sacredness of human life to invite the congregation to adopt a shifted perspective that views the cries for justice of their racially marginalized neighbors as cries for life to be valued.[131] Meyer performs a similar "trick" when he reframes auditors' perceptions of similarity and difference by deploying the body of Christ metaphor that evangelicals traditionally use as an image of unity within the church in a way that also enfolds racial justice protestors and thereby lends credence to their message. Based on what unfolded at Bethlehem, Meyer's critical edge may have proven too sharp for his audience. He also faced an uphill battle. His sermon's invitation to meaningful but challenging ways of thinking and acting was immediately followed by two sermons that told the audience to take comfort in the fact that they were already doing

enough. The Social Gospel themes in Meyer's sermon exemplify a type of evangelical discourse that might begin to heal the historical divisions between evangelical churches and their racial minority neighbors, but his case highlights the rhetorical challenges that pastors face in that process.

Concluding Thoughts

Like in the previous chapter, my purpose has not been to evaluate the direct persuasive effects achieved by the sermons at hand but rather to consider the implications of the constitutive work that the metaphors within them perform. That said, race sermons at Bethlehem offer scholars who study evangelicalism insight into the discursive trends that may shape the movement's future in relation to race issues. The clashes among congregants and elders at Bethlehem in 2021 closely parallel the clashing perspectives offered to congregants in these sermons from the summer of 2020. These three sermons offered the congregation a clear choice: embrace a challenging subjectivity that asks them to reevaluate their actions and views of race in response to Floyd's suffering and consider becoming involved in efforts to address racism, or embrace a comforting subjectivity that gives them reasons to stay the course, avoid difficult conversations about race that challenge the status quo, and draw comfort from belief in a coming future in which racial injustice no longer matters. Bethlehem's treatment of the pastors who preached these sermons provides an indication of how auditors chose. Conflicts arose among members and elders over the concept of empathy in January of 2021, and three "empathetic" pastors resigned in the following months after facing censure and backlash from the church's elder board for preaching sermons about racial justice and empathy. One of them was Ming-Jinn Tong, the Neighborhood Outreach Pastor who ran a grocery ministry that served economically-

disadvantaged neighborhoods facing food shortages caused by the 2020 riots. The Social Gospel-influenced subjectivity that Meyer's sermon offers to congregants aligns with the emphasis on empathy for marginalized people evident in such ministry efforts, while the subjectivities in Zuleger's sermon and Stokes's sermon align with the type of racial reconciliation framework that frames calls for empathy for the marginalized as unnecessary and divisive. Evangelical megachurches face important decisions about whether to embrace or suppress rhetoric that challenges the racial status quo.

Meyer's use of the fundamental tenets of evangelical theology to critique systemic racism appears to have been at odds with the prevailing perspectives on race embraced by his audience of congregants and elders. In his resignation letter, Meyer critiqued a "unity culture" among elders that took "institutional protection too far" by failing to accurately communicate to congregants the critiques that Pickering and Tong, the two other resigning pastors, shared about the church's handling of race issues.[132] In contrast, it appears that Zuleger and Stokes aligned with the rhetorical expectations of their auditors by producing sermons that used evangelical theology to voice support for the status quo. A few months after Zuleger's sermon framed rhetorical efforts to voice racial grievances as sinful burdens that would hinder the church, elders allegedly ignored the recommendations of the church's Racial Harmony Task Force. Elders at Bethlehem also allegedly quashed deliberation over the motion to separate Bethlehem from the anti-empathy comments of Joe Rigney just months after Stokes used the SBC, an organization whose leadership initially quashed an effort to condemn White supremacy in 2017, as an example of how White Christians should seek forgiveness for race issues. Zuleger and Stokes not only remained on staff but rose to positions of greater authority following the pastoral resignations in 2021 and the split in 2022. Pastors may play a key role by delivering the most

public examples of a church's race rhetoric from the pulpit, but elder boards, lay leaders, and congregants play a vital role as they choose what kinds of racial discourse to accept, elevate, question, or reject.

Regardless of whether the race sermons preached at Bethlehem in the summer of 2020 directly influenced the controversies that unfolded at the church, these events paint a picture of the divisive climate surrounding race within evangelicalism and illustrate the challenges faced by pastors trying to confront the racial status quo in their churches. Bethlehem was once the church that embraced Jason Meyer because of his commitment to racial justice. Not ten years later, those who prefer to suppress dialogue about race appear to have prevailed in the church. In his resignation letter, Meyer concludes that he is no longer a "pastoral fit" for Bethlehem and would be better suited to a congregation consisting of "mainstream evangelical" and "post-evangelical" believers who adhere to Bebbington's quadrilateral in spiritual matters but are critical of the religious right's acceptance of Donald Trump and its "failure to engage on topics of race and sexuality in helpful ways."[133] Meyer now pastors at Urban Refuge in Minneapolis, a church that states its adherence to evangelical theology but also voices a commitment to "speaking up and out from a biblical perspective on behalf of individuals and communities experiencing social and racial injustice."[134] His George Floyd sermon is worthy of highlighting as an example of evangelical rhetoric that challenges the racial status quo by using metaphoric language to construct a subjectivity for congregants that mediates their theology into a socially-oriented approach to race issues. Though his message was met with resistance at Bethlehem, his case suggests that some evangelical leaders are, in fact, willing to take up a "new and more nuanced conversation" about race even when doing so comes at a personal cost like losing a prominent position at one of evangelicalism's most influential megachurches.[135] In the next chapter, I

analyze metaphors in the theological rhetoric of a church diving deeply into that same conversation.

Chapter 3 Notes

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Chapter 4: Against the Powers with Woodland Hills Church

Woodland Hills Church

Like the churches that I discussed in the previous two chapters, Woodland Hills Church was conducting online services when news of George Floyd's murder led to unrest in the Twin Cities. Unlike those churches, congregants at Woodland Hills were already accustomed to meeting online and to sometimes hearing messages from the pulpit that deal with the intersections of evangelicalism's theology and its political and social entanglements. In this chapter, I analyze a series of four sermons preached by Senior Pastor Greg Boyd and Outreach and Teaching Pastor Osheta Moore in the weekends following Floyd's murder. Like in previous chapters, the goal of this case study is to understand how the metaphors deployed in this church's sermons about race invite congregants to inhabit subjectivities that have implications for race relations. Where case studies of sermons at Substance Church and Bethlehem Baptist Church primarily yielded insights into how evangelical metaphor use offers racially problematic subjectivities to congregations, this case study provides an opportunity to examine the deployment of metaphors by pastors attempting to constitute their congregation as agents of meaningful social change.

I argue that the metaphoric clusters deployed in the George Floyd sermons of Woodland Hills invite congregants to respond to the crisis in their city by inhabiting the subjectivity of an evangelical antiracist who retains evangelicalism's commitments to a message of individual salvation and to personal spiritual practices while also embracing a call to socially-engaged racial justice work. A cluster of metaphors that frame White supremacy as America's original sin invites auditors to see the evils of systemic racism on clear display in George Floyd's death and

connects atonement theology to a vision of present-day racial unity. Presenting White supremacy as "White heresy," these sermons mediate evangelical theology into guidance to challenge individualistic views of race and acknowledge the White church's historical complicity in racial oppression. The sermons also use a cluster of metaphors related to the notion of *kairos* to present the George Floyd moment as a special opportunity to strike at the root of White supremacy in America by challenging unjust systems of power. A cluster of metaphors that portrays a space of cosmic spiritual influence from which spiritual "powers and principalities" influence society invites evangelicals to reject individualistic explanations of racial disparities, and metaphors of posture offer congregants practical guidance for engaging with that battle by inhabiting an antiracist subjectivity that uses peacemaking strategies to work towards racial reform. At the same time, pastors provide the congregation with examples of participation in material, not just spiritual, forms of racial justice work.

This case study unfolds as follows. First, I provide a brief overview of Woodland Hills, its pastors, and its ministry efforts in the Twin Cities. Next, I review specific theological concepts and their evangelical interpretations as a backdrop for reading the sermons preached at Woodland Hills. Following an analysis of metaphoric clusters and the constitutive work that they perform in these four sermons, I discuss their implications for the relationships between Woodland Hills and its community and between evangelicalism and the Black community. I also give attention to the constraints that pastors face while attempting to metaphorically mediate evangelical theological commitments into a call to practical engagement in racial reform work.

Social Engagement at Woodland Hills

Founded in 1992, Woodland Hills is an evangelical megachurch situated at the border between St. Paul and the suburb of Maplewood. Woodland Hills ministers to a congregation that the church's website describes as consisting of people from a "rich diversity of ethnic, educational and socio-economic backgrounds."[1] Having embraced an online model of sermon distribution and engagement with congregants in 2018, the church now describes its congregation as "several hundred folks" who "show up for our services each weekend, and thousands more" who "tune into our podcast and live stream each week."[2] The church is comprised of approximately five thousand members in total.[3] Notably, the church hosts several active ministry programs aimed at the alleviating suffering of marginalized individuals in the Twin Cities. These include programs that provide supplies and housing to people experiencing homelessness, help Congolese refugees integrate into life in Minnesota, and put meals in the hands of critically ill individuals.[4]

During the aftermath of the unrest in the Twin Cities, Woodland Hills became involved in charitable efforts aimed at ameliorating issues affecting historically disadvantaged and racially marginalized communities and churches in the region. This includes participation in cleanup and rebuilding efforts led by Transform Minnesota, a multiracial association of evangelical clergy in the Twin Cities.[5] Clergy from Woodland Hills also participated in conversations hosted by Transform Minnesota that were aimed giving clergy from historically Black churches an opportunity guide clergy from predominantly White churches in building healthy long-term relationships between Black and White congregations.[6] Woodland Hills also contributed to a Transform Minnesota program called One Fund that provided financial assistance to "support the work of local African American churches and ministries who, due to historic inequities, are

disproportionately affected by the recent crisis."[7] In the sermons, Woodland Hills's pastors also describe their own participation in racial justice protests and commend participation to their congregants. A team of more than thirty pastoral and administrative staff members at Woodland Hills operate under the direction of Senior Pastor Greg Boyd.

Boyd serves as the "primary teaching pastor and vision-caster" for Woodland Hills.[8] An author and a former theology professor, Boyd has a reputation among evangelicals for challenging conservative theological conventions. His views on disputed theological topics such as the nature of hell and God's foreknowledge of the future reflect Anabaptist influences on his theology and have led to sharp disagreements with other evangelical leaders, including fellow Twin Cities minister and theologian John Piper.[9] Despite Boyd's tendency to clash with other evangelicals, his teaching retains an emphasis on the hallmark theology of biblical inerrancy from which evangelical pastoral rhetoric derives much of its authority for congregants. He describes himself as holding a "high view of biblical inspiration" and states an adherence to the other foundational tenets of evangelical theology that I described in Chapter 1.[10] Boyd is also known for questioning evangelicalism's political entanglements. In 2004, Woodland Hills saw around one thousand members exit the church after Boyd preached a series of controversial messages opposing the blending of "faith with partisan politics" and critiquing evangelicals' role in the culture wars.[11] That same willingness to challenge evangelical convention is evident in Boyd's sermons about George Floyd, which include comments about the responsibility that he feels as a White man for standing against systemic racism.[12] The first three sermons in the series that I analyze are delivered by Boyd. The fourth is delivered by his colleague, Osheta Moore.

Osheta Moore joined Woodland Hills's staff as an Outreach and Teaching Pastor in 2018 and began regularly preaching as a "guest speaker" on Sundays when Boyd was absent from the

pulpit.[13] Moore is also an author, podcaster, and blogger whose media ministry work focuses on helping Christians navigate conversations about race through the lenses of antiracism and peacemaking. Theologically, she describes herself as "an Anabaptisty Kingdom-minded woman who can't help but talk about Jesus."[14] Notably, Moore was also the only Black member of Woodland Hills's preaching team and the only Black preacher on staff at the three megachurches whose sermons I have analyzed. Her role on Woodland Hills's preaching team reflects growing support among evangelicals for women in positions of pastoral leadership.[15] However, women who preach in the evangelical tradition are often regarded as less authoritative and less capable of holding positions of leadership. LifeWay Research data from 2022 shows that only around forty-four percent of evangelical pastors agree that a woman could be the senior pastor at their church.[16] Additionally, Wisseh argues that Black women who enter positions of "institutional power" that involve creating "cultural products" such as television shows or, in this case, sermons often face unchallenged expectations to "show deference" to White male leaders.[17] These expectations influence what the embodied rhetoric of Black women who, like Moore, hold positions or work within traditions historically predominated by White male leaders signifies to auditors.[18] Auditors may have interpreted Moore's sermon as a simple consequence of her responsibility to fill the pulpit in Boyd's absence, but it is also possible that auditors read her sermon as a form of racial image politics calculated to project an impression of Black support for the White perspective presented by Boyd's earlier sermons. Likewise, auditors might interpret the sermon as an expression of Moore's theological interest in race issues, but they could also read it as an attempt by the church's leaders to reassure congregants that the church is giving adequate attention to Black voices. At the time of this writing, Moore is listed on staff at Roots Moravian Church in St. Paul where she ministers alongside her husband.[19] With this picture of

Woodland Hills and its leadership in mind, I turn to my analysis of the metaphoric clusters in the sermons that that these pastors preached.

Metaphoric Clusters in Woodland Hills's Race Sermons

On May 31, June 7, and June 14, Greg Boyd preached three sermons entitled "Please, I Can't Breathe," "White Heresy," and "Revolting Against the Powers." In these messages, Boyd identifies George Floyd's murder as a consequence of America's "original sin" of White supremacy, calls fellow White Christians to acknowledge the White church's historical complicity in White supremacy, argues that Christ's atonement has implications for racial unity, describes Floyd's death as a "*kairos* moment" for meaningful racial reform, and invites auditors to engage in spiritual warfare against evil spiritual "powers and principalities" by participating in tangible efforts to oppose racism and ameliorate the suffering caused by chaotic conditions in the Twin Cities. He also provides an example of that engagement in "White Heresy" by describing his own participation in a racial justice protest despite the deadly risk posed by COVID-19.[20]

Osheta Moore concludes the series of four messages with "Responding to the Powers" on June 21. Moore's message continues the themes of spiritual warfare and *kairos* by inviting congregants to oppose structural racism by adopting the identity of an "antiracist peacemaker" who opposes systemic injustice by taking practical action from a posture of humility. Moore grounds the sermon in her experience as a Black woman who grew up in a White evangelical church that considered conversations about race to be too divisive and in her experience as a mother of biracial children navigating the impact of Trayvon Martin's murder on her family.[21] She also reflects on her participation in a racial justice march led by Black clergy and invites congregants to imitate her example.[22] I discuss that participation and the way that Moore relates

it to a metaphor of foot washing in a subsequent section. As these summaries indicate, the sermons at hand are rich with theological concepts and metaphoric language.

Unlike the sermons in the previous chapter, these sermons rely upon a shared set of theological concepts and metaphors in pursuit of a shared constitutive aim. No single space or mobility metaphor predominates in these sermons. Rather, a skein of space and mobility metaphors based upon a variety of biblical images and narratives coheres into a larger structure of meaning that entails rejecting White supremacy and embracing an antiracist perspective. For that reason, I organize this analysis by metaphoric cluster rather than by sermon or by rhetor. I begin with the cluster of metaphors that Boyd uses to problematize America's relationship to White supremacy.

Sin Cluster

Woodland Hills's race sermons deploy a cluster of metaphors related to sin that problematize White supremacy and its role in American society. Before deploying those metaphors, Boyd uses George Floyd's murderer as a metonymic symbol of White supremacy in America. Boyd begins his May 31 sermon with biographical information about George Floyd and then vividly narrates his death. Boyd describes Chauvin's actions as cold-hearted and merciless and notes that Chauvin "doesn't even pretend to exercise the least bit of decency" towards Floyd, who was known to his loved ones as a "gentle giant."[23] Boyd later argues that Chauvin's brazen disdain for Floyd's life and his "confidence that he is above accountability" display with "crystal clarity the face of White supremacy."[24] Boyd also attributes a spiritual dimension to racial injustice that will form a meaningful theme in the remainder of the sermon series when he describes Chauvin's actions as a manifestation of the "same spirit of White supremacy that has always wanted to have the White knee on the Black neck."[25] This figurative

language invites auditors to view Chauvin not merely as a rogue agent or "bad apple," but rather as an iconic representation of spiritual evil.[26] A metaphor of blood illustrates the heinous nature of George Floyd's death and the system that enabled it.

Boyd uses a biblical spatial metaphor based upon the ground soaked by Abel's blood in Genesis 4 to characterize racial injustice in American society. Genesis 4 narrates the first murder recorded in the Bible. In the passage, Adam and Eve's first son, Cain, kills his younger brother Abel out of jealousy that God accepted Abel's animal sacrifice but rejected Cain's offering of produce.[27] Evangelical theology points to the murder as a sign of humanity's "progressively more malevolent" nature following the commission of the first sin by Adam and Eve. "Am I my brother's keeper?" is Cain's infamously callous response when confronted by God, who in turn tells Cain that Abel's blood "cries out" to him "from the ground" and condemns Cain to wander the earth as an exile.[28] Evangelicals typically interpret this notion of blood crying out as a figurative expression. One Bible study guide suggests that God is "using poetic language" to rebuke Cain's attempt at deception and to convey God's sense of justice which demands that wrongs "be made right."[29] Theologian R.C. Sproul argues that God's statement about Abel's blood crying out is a critique both of Cain's flippant denial of fraternal responsibility and of his hard-hearted unwillingness to admit his sin.[30]

Boyd uses the image of Abel's blood crying out to God as a metaphor for the outrageous injustice of George Floyd's death and, in a broader sense, White supremacy. In doing so, he links Chauvin's actions and White supremacy to the biblical origins of murder and invites auditors to view America as stained by the sin of racism. Noting that "Chauvin finally was charged with third degree murder and manslaughter" but that this "doesn't seem nearly harsh enough or quick enough," Boyd describes the murder as a "heartless crime" that cannot be minimized as "a one-

off event."[31] He adds that America "didn't get here overnight; there's been a long, long, long history of this going back to before our country was ever founded."[32] Boyd then introduces his biblical metaphor to argue that this accumulated history of violence demands a response:

> It's like when Cain killed Abel, the Lord says that his blood cries out from the ground. When you have injustice, the blood cries out from the ground. And we've got four hundred years of blood crying out. And that's why many in the African American community are hitting a boiling point.[33]

To illustrate what that four hundred years of bloody American ground looks like, he describes how the deaths of Eric Garner, Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, and numerous other victims either resulted in no convictions or only resulted in convictions because the proliferation of cameras enabled the public to become aware of what happened.[34] Boyd tells auditors that the blood of these victims is "crying out" just like Abel's blood cried out to God because pleas for justice have thus far been largely ignored by those with the power to enact change.[35] On a spatial level, this metaphor invites congregants to view America as likewise stained with unjustly-shed blood that cries out for justice. However, it also presents Chauvin as a modern day Cain, a murderer whose callousness demands outrage from the righteous. Constitutively, it invites the congregation to imitate God's righteous outrage with righteous outrage of their own at a system of justice that repeatedly covers for equally sinful deeds by failing to adequately investigate and prosecute racialized violence. With these vivid metaphoric descriptions of racial injustice in view, Boyd asks auditors to view White supremacy through the lens of a sin that evangelicals consider the most fundamental.

Boyd also metaphorically casts White supremacy as America's original sin and as a contaminating plague, thereby mediating evangelical theology's conversionistic imperative to avoid sin into a moral imperative to reject White supremacy. The term "original sin" refers to

"Adam's sin of disobedience in eating from the tree of knowledge of good and evil" in Genesis 3:16.[36] Theologian Michael Bird explains that the term also encapsulates "the inherited corruption and collective guilt that humanity received from Adam" and serves as an explanation of "the universal and inevitable nature of sin."[37] The doctrine's importance arises not just from its specific content but also "because it is integrally related with other doctrines which are of primary theological and practical importance," including salvation, atonement, human nature, and evangelism.[38] Evangelicals vary in their understanding of the full implications of this doctrine, but they typically agree that original sin means that humanity is unable to overcome "the problem of a corrupt nature within" without receiving salvation from God.[39] Evangelical theology also teaches that it was through original sin that death entered the world and mortality became a part of the human experience.[40] To describe something as original sin is to attribute to it the ultimate power of corruption.

In "Please, I Can't Breathe," Boyd argues that the reason that Christians often ignore Black calls for justice is that the White church in America has "to a large degree been contaminated with the original sin of America, and that is White supremacy."[41] Boyd illustrates that contaminating influence with a disease metaphor that describes White supremacy as a "pandemic" that has "plagued our nation."[42] He argues that one symptom of that pandemic is system-protecting "self-talk" that, by presenting America as an exceptional or Christian nation, has served to "immunize" White Christians to the cries of Black victims and draw the White church "deeper and deeper" into the culture wars.[43] Given that this sermon was preached at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, this viral metaphor offers congregants an especially sharp moral contrast between the "unhealthy" way that the evangelical church in America has historically conducted itself in relation to race issues and the way that Boyd argues that it should

conduct itself today. Congregants who inhabit the subjectivity offered to them in Woodland Hills's racial discourse accept that evangelicalism has fallen prey to the sickening influence of White supremacy.

Having cast White supremacy as a corrupting sin, Boyd turns to a more specific type of sin to characterize White supremacy's influence upon the American church. A metaphor of White heresy invites congregants to adopt a critical perspective that views the influence of White supremacy upon the American church as the result of a grave theological error involving the rejection of evangelicalism's most fundamental doctrine. In "Please, I Can't Breathe," Boyd begins laying the conceptual framework for his "White Heresy" sermon by arguing that it was ultimately "a failure of the White church throughout the history of this country" to "love as Christ loves" and "speak about injustice" that enabled society to reach a point where there is still "so much blood crying out from the ground."[44] Boyd's rhetoric offers congregants an expanded interpretation of the theology of the atonement that has implications for race relations. This expanded interpretation then serves as the basis for his accusation of heresy. Drawing upon Ephesians 2, Boyd argues that part of the reason that Christ died was "to tear down the walls of division that separate humanity," destroying through the atonement what that passage metaphorically describes as a "dividing wall of hostility" between Jews and Gentiles.[45] Boyd applies this dividing wall metaphor to racial divisions in contemporary American society and argues that "by means of the blood, of the cross, by means of self-sacrificial love," God is working "throughout the cosmos to reconcile all things to himself."[46] This language assigns implications to the atonement not just for individual salvation, but also for present-day race relations. Boyd elaborates upon those implications by arguing that "George Floyd is your brother, whom you are called to love," as is Trayvon Martin, Philando Castile, and "every other

Black and Brown person who's ever been unjustly abused and killed by White police."[47] This metaphor use asks congregants to adopt a subjectivity that embraces racial unity as an implication of evangelicalism's crucicentric theology. Boyd returns to this point in "White Heresy."

In his June 7 sermon, Boyd further supports his expanded notion of atonement theology by using an expansive overview of scripture to argue that racial unity has always been God's original intention for humanity. Boyd points to the murder of Abel and the tower of Babel as signs that humanity's sin increasingly divided people from one another over time and then uses references to Abraham, Isaiah, and Christ to argue that God's mission has always been to "reunite humanity."[48] Boyd argues that God chose Abraham to 'draw all the peoples of the earth" to God, that Isaiah's prophecies commanded Israel to "call all nations" to God, and that Jesus ultimately fulfills this "mission of Israel" when he states that he will "draw all people under me" in John 12.[49] This brief biblical survey from Genesis through Christ links racial unity to atonement theology. Rhetorically, this argument situates evangelical auditors as participants within an already-complete narrative in which Christ's atonement leads to a unified people. But, unlike the articulation of this eschatological theme that I analyzed in Zuleger's sermon in Chapter 3, Boyd critiques evangelicalism's failure to take part in that unification.

Boyd elaborates upon the metaphor of heresy, critiquing evangelicalism's failure to live in accordance with the atonement's implications for racial unity. Asking how the White church in America missed those implications, he argues that the most meaningful and profound answer is that "the White church was held captive by a false ideology of White supremacy that just blinded them to a whole lot of stuff in the Bible and a whole lot of stuff in the world."[50] The immobility metaphor of being "held captive" suggests being restrained by a more powerful force,

and the metaphor of blindness suggests falling victim to an illness or physical limitation. Taken alone, these two metaphors alone could imply that the church was a hapless victim of White supremacy rather than a complicit participant in it. Denying that possibility, Boyd draws upon the Frederick Douglass essay "Answering to the Charge of Infidelity" to critique the evangelical church's involvement with White supremacy.[51] Boyd quotes Douglass's condemnation of White Christians whose interpretations of the Bible had "thrown into the background whatever in the Bible could be construed in opposition to slavery" and had worked "to bring forward that which they could torture into its support."[52] Boyd argues that the American church must confess its failure to preach and live by the full implications of the atonement and argues that if "even a fraction" of White Christians in America had taken seriously the biblical commands to imitate Christ's love, then slavery and White supremacy "could not have gotten off the ground."[53] This cluster of metaphors offers congregants a perspective that views White supremacy's harmful consequences for American society not merely as the symptoms of a disease that befell hapless White Christians but rather as the result of willful theological decisions to "torture" the scripture into a rejection of the gospel message's implications for racial unity. For present-day auditors, the metaphor of heresy reinforces the idea that tolerance of White supremacy and refusal to engage in racial justice work are grievous violations of the fundamental theological tenets of the evangelical faith. Boyd also offers congregants a means of pushing back against the corrupting influence to which evangelicalism has fallen prey.

In "White Heresy," Boyd offers congregants a picture of what it looks like to stand against White supremacy despite the risks and also links that act to Christ's sacrificial atonement. He explains that despite the risk posed by COVID-19, a deadly airborne disease that spread quickly through crowds, he and a group of people "as diverse as humanity itself" were

"out in crowds and were shouting his name: George Floyd."[54] Boyd notes that he was fully aware of that risk but felt that it was morally necessary to take it:

> It's possible that some folks who were protesting might die. I hope I'm not one of them. But, you know, the thing is that you have to do it. I had to. It's like, this is wrong, and you stand against it. And so, people all over the place [are] willing to put their lives at risk to some extent by gathering together and saying his name and protesting the injustice.[55]

The notion that "you have to" stand against racial injustice despite deadly risk aligns with the sermon's closing call to action. He closes "White Heresy" by telling congregants that they must work to achieve racial unity because, in addition to dying to forgive sins, "Jesus died for this. He spilled blood for this."[56] The implication is that if the cause of racial justice is important enough that Christ gave his life for it, then his evangelical followers should also take up the cause despite the bodily risks involved.

As a whole, the cluster of sin metaphors in Woodland Hills's George Floyd sermons performs racially significant constitutive work by mediating theologies of sin and atonement into an imperative to reject White supremacy and the abusive systems that enabled Floyd's death. This cluster of metaphors invites auditors who may hold individual views of the atonement or be skeptical of structural explanations of racial inequality to see White supremacy's influence on America as an equally potent source of corruption as original sin, see the unjust killing of Black Americans as equally grievous to God as Cain's fratricidal deed, and see in Chauvin's callousness the same attitude that has defined relations between White Americans and Black Americans all too often. The metaphor of heresy specifically characterizes evangelicalism's complicity in accepting that diseasing influence as a self-serving theological error and a violation of the church's imperative to carry out God's goal of bringing about a unified humanity. These sermons also point to Christ's death as a picture of how far Christians should be willing to go in

rejecting that complicity and seeking change. A cluster of metaphors based upon the notion of *kairos* infuses that imperative with urgency.

Kairos Cluster

A cluster of time metaphors in Woodland Hills's race sermons invites auditors to view the cultural moment surrounding George Floyd's death as a special opportunity to strike a critical blow against White supremacy. Biblical imagery drawn from the prophetic preaching of John the Baptist as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and from the Book of Esther in the Old Testament serve as theological illustrations of what it means to seize a "*kairos* moment" by standing up to an unjust system of power. The concept of *kairos* invites auditors to adopt a subjectivity that responds to the racial crisis with a sense of urgency. Those who hesitate or ignore a *kairos* moment risk losing the opportunity that it presents. In his June 7 sermon, Boyd speaks about the "diabolical clarity" with which White supremacy has "shown its ugly face" through Chauvin's actions.[57] He later tells auditors that Greek contains two words for time. *Chronos* refers to "normal time," and *kairos* refers to "a unique time, a special time, a time that's infused with great significance" because "structural things are turning."[58] Linking this concept to the metaphor of heresy already deployed in the sermons, Boyd argues that this special time is meant for "White Christians, folks like me, to own up to the past the history of the White church here in America" and for Christians to admit that while they have "been happy preaching individual salvation," they have failed to preach the biblical message of racial oneness that constitutes "the other reason for which Jesus died."[59] For preachers at Woodland Hills, this moment of clarity presents a strategic opportunity to strike a blow against White supremacy.

Boyd uses a cluster of destruction metaphors to illustrate the strategic nature of the George Floyd moment. Paraphrasing language used by John the Baptist in Matthew 3 to rebuke the Pharisees, religious authorities who rejected his message of repentance, Boyd says,

> John the Baptist at one point said that the axe is being laid to the root of the tree. When Jesus came into the world, the axe is being laid to the root of the tree. No more just like tinkering around and trimming and primming and all the rest. No, you're going after the root. And that's what it feels like is the time right now. The axe is being laid to the root of the tree. And we're getting at something foundational here, something huge. And what we're getting at is White supremacy. That is the disease that is in the root of the tree of this country of ours.[60]

Boyd's image of applying an axe to a tree's roots conveys the notion of destroying something by attacking its foundations and source of nourishment. The metaphoric language does seem to shift from one target to another; the statement about "the root of the tree of this country of ours" seems to position America as the tree to be toppled, but Boyd's description of "getting at" the "disease" of White supremacy suggests that he wishes to excise White supremacy from America. Regardless of the mixed imagery, Boyd's deployment of this metaphor draws a parallel between John's day and the present day by suggesting that just as Jesus's entry into the world presented a challenge to the religious structures of authority of his day, George Floyd's death is an opportunity to challenge the structure of White supremacy and its diseasing influence in ours. Boyd reinforces this idea by describing the video of George Floyd's "slow, torturous murder" as an opportunity to topple the "stronghold" of White supremacy in America and "to poke a fatal wound, or at least a very deep wound into that beast that we've been feeding for two hundred years."[61] He later adds that it is "time for the White church to start helping with that dagger."[62] These additional metaphors, which depict White supremacy as a stronghold under attack and a

beast being stabbed, reinforce the need to strike against White supremacy at a moment in which it is vulnerable to strategic intervention.

In a live-streamed discussion that occurs at the end of White Heresy, Boyd and Moore explain how congregants can follow through on those metaphors. Moore explains that the church is participating in Transform Minnesota and asks congregants to "show love with your hands" by participating in the organization's cleanup and rebuilding efforts in neighborhoods most impacted by unrest.[63] Boyd then asks congregants to donate to the One Fund program, explaining that it was designed to address "disparities in living conditions and medical treatment" revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic by providing funds that African American churches can use to minister to their communities.[64] Congregants who take these steps may not be risking as much as John, who according to the gospels was beheaded for his critiques of the politically powerful, but these steps do entail a sacrifice of time, comfort, or money.[65] The sermon's statements about White supremacy's powerful influence over evangelicalism and American culture may make the possibility of reform seem hopeless. However, the sermons crucially invite congregants to see White supremacy as an organism that is vulnerable to strategically-inflicted wounds and to imitate John's moral courage by taking action in response to inequities in the Twin Cities.

Similar notions of courage and strategic timing figure into Moore's June 21 sermon. In "Responding to the Powers," Moore uses the biblical story of Esther as an example of the meaningful effect of standing up against racial injustice in a "*kairos* moment." The Book of Esther narrates how a young queen risks her life by violating royal customs to challenge a genocidal dictate misguidedly issued by her husband, the Persian King Ahasuerus, against the Jewish people.[66] In the narrative, Esther's timely intervention averts the genocide and brings to justice the royal advisor responsible for the maneuvering the king into implementing the

dictate.[67] Relying on her audience's familiarity with this narrative, Moore briefly mentions Esther and uses her as an illustration of timely and practical intervention against systems of injustice:

> Think about Esther. She was in her own *kairos* moment. She was called to speak up on behalf of the Israelites. And what she did, what she brought to that moment, affected generations to come. We have smaller kinds of *kairos* moments like accepting or rejecting a marriage proposal or moving to another state. A *kairos* moment is a moment that asks you to pay attention and respond. So, what if in this *kairos* moment, as we revolt against the powers and, in this case, systems of racial oppression, we choose to revolt against them through education, and prayer, and activism, and conversation?[68]

Here Moore suggests that congregants have an opportunity to, like Esther, achieve generational change by engaging in a blend of spiritual and practical interventions. By using this image of moral courage from a privileged queen within a context of ethnic conflict as a metaphor for how congregants should respond to present-day oppression, Moore invites auditors not only to see White supremacy as vulnerable to courageous intervention, but also to see themselves as agents who, like Esther, are poised to intervene. This choice of allusion also underscores Moore's call timely intervention with a sense of urgency; auditors who are familiar with the Esther narrative know that had she hesitated, the genocidal dictate would have been enacted and her people would have been slaughtered. Failure to courageously oppose racism today could likewise result in further loss of life.

Altogether, this cluster of metaphors based upon images of timely and strategic intervention invites auditors to see the George Floyd moment as a special time in which the White supremacy's evil has been revealed and made vulnerable to a strategic attack consisting of a blend of spiritual and material interventions. Those who embrace this notion of *kairos* along

with the other aspects of the self-sacrificial subjectivity that these sermons offer to the congregation cannot afford to take a static approach to the cultural moment unfolding around them but must rather intervene with urgency. The sermons also offer guidance about how to undertake that intervention with a cluster of metaphors that mediates spiritual warfare theology into guidance for how to evaluate the root causes of racism.

Powers Cluster

A cluster of metaphors based upon the concept of spiritual "powers and principalities" invites the congregation to adopt a subjectivity that engages in spiritual warfare by opposing structural racism. These sermons use the notion that spiritual entities exist in a cosmic space from which they influence human events to characterize the role of structural racism in society. Ephesians 6's description of evil spiritual entities, or "powers and principalities," forms the basis for the concept of "spiritual warfare" in evangelical theology. In Chapter 3, I examined that passage's use of an armor metaphor to characterize the spiritual practices that Christians turn to for the purpose of resisting evil in their lives.[69] Evangelicals typically interpret this passage as a description of spiritual entities that live in an unseen dimension from which they influence human events. For example, the website of evangelical multimedia giant Focus on the Family articulates this perspective, describing belief "in the reality of spiritual warfare and the unseen spiritual world" from which "Satan and his minions" attempt to interfere with the spread of the gospel message and the lives of Christians, who must resist through spiritual practices like reading the Bible, praying, and seeking spiritual guidance.[70] In their sermons, Boyd and Moore connect these spiritual entities to the evils of White supremacy and structural racism, thereby linking a space of unseen spiritual entities in which many evangelicals believe to societal problems about which many evangelicals harbor skepticism. In the following paragraphs, I

explain how their deployment of this metaphor mediates evangelical theology about the existence of spiritual entities into an invitation to a change in perspective regarding the causes and issues of agency involved in racial disparity. The notion that malicious spiritual entities can shape human events from a space that exists outside of the visible world offers congregants a theological rationale for accepting that larger structural factors, not just individual choices, have led to the racial disparities evident in American society.

First, metaphoric language ascribing influence to cosmic entities that exist beyond physical space invites auditors to reject individualistic perspectives on racial injustice. Boyd defines what Ephesians 6 calls "cosmic powers of this present darkness" or "principalities and powers" as "agents who were entrusted by God" over domains including nature and human society who later chose to rebel against God and use their authority to corrupt the world.[71] He notes that some Christians believe that these spiritual agents and their cosmic domains are literal while others consider them to be metaphoric, but he argues that either understanding conveys the notion that there is a "transcendent reality" that is "invisible" to people but influences them in an "unconscious" way.[72] Addressing the questions of agency introduced by this concept, Boyd argues that the Bible "does not endorse an ideology of individualism," but rather recognizes "tensions" between "morally responsible free will" and "the systems in which that free will gets exercised."[73] He uses the disproportionate incarceration of Black males as an example of how systemic forces produce racial disparity in an aspect of society where individual moral choices are also salient.[74] By using the concept of spiritual powers as a metaphor for systemic injustice, Boyd invites auditors to recognize that the racial inequities in American society are not reducible to individual moral choices. Testimony from a guest speaker presents the influence of these powers in a more concrete manner.

Through the metaphor of spiritual powers, Woodland Hills's sermons offer auditors a subjectivity that recognizes systemic racism as a cause of racial disparities. During a short segment near the end of "Revolting Against the Powers," a St. Paul school administrator and Woodland Hills member named Cedric Baker explicitly links the notion of spiritual powers to systemic racism. He argues that it is important for Christians to "see how principalities and powers really have worked against us as a society" and explains that "systems of racial oppression" are a form of what Ephesians 6:11 describes as the "schemes" or "wiles" of those powers.[75] Baker identifies racial disparities in unemployment, police stops, and housing as examples of the harmful influence of those schemes. Citing racist language from real estate ethics handbooks, he also elaborates upon the detrimental effects of redlining and racial covenants on the ability of Black Americans in the Twin Cities to build generational wealth through home ownership.[76] Boyd returns to conclude the sermon with a call to "revolt" against the powers by "resisting pressure to conform" to "the invisible forces that shape us without our knowing about it."[77] Baker's presentation gives auditors a concrete picture of what those forces are and what the consequences are of conforming to them.

The spiritual warfare metaphors in Woodland Hills's race rhetoric also shift the ground of battle from an earthly space to a spiritual one, inviting evangelicals to reject culture war hostilities in favor of taking peaceful action against systemic racism. In "Responding to the Powers," Moore uses a metaphor of invasion to describe what it means to engage in spiritual warfare against the malign influence of the powers and principalities. Unlike the sermons that I examined in Chapter 2 that presented non-evangelical communities as moral inferiors and targets of invasion, however, Moore's invasion targets enemies that exist in a spiritual space rather than an earthly one. She argues that adopting an antiracist posture transforms the "merely human"

conflict between "us and them, Black enslaved people and colonizers, White and Black, progressive and conservative, woke or bigot" into a different kind of battle and invites auditors to engage in a "cosmic battle" in which "we as kingdom people of love are invading against the kingdom of hate of this world."[78] While shifting the ground of that "invasion" from a material space to a spiritual one could helpfully prompt auditors to reject antagonism towards other social groups, it could also have the side effect of prompting auditors to ignore the need for material intervention in their community and focus on spiritual practices that, in comparison, likely entail less risk or discomfort. Throughout the sermon, she paraphrases Ephesians 6:12 as a reminder that Christians "wrestle not against flesh and blood as followers of Jesus."[79] This direction to avoid striving with other human beings could lead some congregants to conclude that the only appropriate "invasion" tactics are spiritual rather than embodied.[80] For this reason, the examples of material activism that Boyd and Moore offer to congregants elsewhere in the sermons are an essential counterbalance to this call to intervene against racism in a cosmic space.

Overall, the cluster of spiritual warfare metaphors performs racially significant constitutive work by mediating theology about spiritual entities into guidance that challenges evangelical perspectives on racism. These metaphors challenge individualistic interpretations of racial disparities and offers a theological rationale for recognizing systemic racism as the cause. Concrete descriptions of systemic racism's impacts on the communities of the Twin Cities invites auditors to see a link between those spiritual forces and practical phenomena that can be learned about and intervened against. Though it may have mixed implications for the forms of intervention embraced by the subjectivity offered to the congregation, a spiritual warfare metaphor of invasion invites congregants to take up the cause of resisting those systemic forces

rather than engaging in cultural warfare. A cluster of metaphors that envisions auditors as citizens of a spiritual kingdom provides guidance for responding to this call to action.

Kingdom Cluster

A cluster of metaphors pertaining to the kingdom of God invites the congregation to inhabit an antiracist subjectivity that engages in spiritual warfare against the racial status quo. As I explained in Chapter 2, the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" appear throughout the New Testament and gospels wherein they convey the theological notion that God rules over the universe and over the lives of those who follow him.[81] Evangelical theological discourse typically presents this "now and not yet kingdom" as both a present, earthly manifestation of God's influence in the lives of those who follow the him and a future, heavenly kingdom in which Christ rules over a "new humanity and new creation" as described in prophetic texts.[82] Evangelicals teach that they "bear witness to the kingdom of God" by "making it visible" through evangelism that brings new converts into the kingdom.[83] The kingdom of God and the notion of being a "kingdom person" play a particularly significant role in the constitutive work of these sermons. These metaphors mediate evangelical theology about God's kingdom and Christ's humility into guidance for how Christians should respond to racial injustice. This metaphoric cluster begins with a challenge to earthly ways of thinking about power.

On May 31, Boyd first introduces the spatial metaphor of the kingdom of God as an antithesis to earthly systems that enable oppressive power. This metaphor also forms the conceptual basis of a "kingdom person" subjectivity that he and Moore invite congregants to inhabit in subsequent sermons. Describing how the church needs to "roar" against racial injustice, Boyd specifies that the church is "not trying to take over the country" or "to make a new and improved kingdom version of the kingdom of the world."[84] Rather, he contends that the

kingdom of God is separate and "radically different from the kingdom of this world."[85] When read in combination with Boyd's critiques of White supremacy, this antithesis challenges White Christian nationalist rhetoric. A key rhetorical strategy for that movement is to blur the lines between Christian identity and American citizenship by arguing that true American citizenship belongs only to God's chosen "elect" consisting of White, natural-born, conservative citizens.[86] For Boyd, Christians are not to seek that kind of earthly power. Having articulated what the kingdom of God is not, Boyd uses a metaphor of citizenship to define it.

Boyd deploys a metaphor of citizenship that prompts White auditors to use the privileges that they have as Americans to advocate for the oppressed. He bases this approach upon Paul's use of his citizenship as narrated in Acts 16. Boyd describes how during this incident, Paul, despite viewing himself first and foremost as a citizen of the kingdom of God, used his privileges as a Roman citizenship to demand that he be personally escorted out of prison by a magistrate after having been illegally beaten and imprisoned for healing a demon-possessed girl.[87] Explaining his interpretation of this passage, Boyd states that though it is not the job of Christians to "run the country" or "be wiser than everybody else in how to run the kingdom of the world," Paul's actions did not "violate the separation of the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world" because he was righteously "holding the government accountable to its own rules."[88] This language asks Christians to observe a hierarchy in which the privileges of their earthly citizenship are subordinated to the higher purposes and responsibilities of their citizenship in a heavenly kingdom. It provides a direct contrast to the rhetoric of Christian nationalist groups like the White Christian nationalist movement and the "Seven Mountain Mandate" movement that argue that Christians have a biblical imperative and a biblical right to seize political control of America.[89] Boyd's citizenship metaphor suggests that it is appropriate

for Christians to use their earthly privileges to intervene in civic matters when it is to speak up for the oppressed and hold officials like Chauvin accountable for their abuses of power, but it also suggests that racist and nationalist ideological groups who present Christianity as a call to seize earthly power are violating the meaning of citizenship in the kingdom of God.

Building upon the hierarchy that he has presented to congregants, Boyd draws a parallel between Paul's Roman citizenship and White privilege. He says,

> I'm a White person in America and I've got privilege, which means I've got a voice that some other people don't have. And there's a guy on the street being suffocated unjustly by a White police officer, and maybe they won't listen to the cries of the guy being suffocated. 'Please, will you believe me?' 'No, I'm not going to believe you.' Maybe they won't listen to the cries of the people on the side, but they might listen to a White person. I've got a voice that others don't have. You've got, as a White person, a voice that others don't have, which means you have a moral responsibility to use it. If that voice can save one life, you've got a moral responsibility to use it. And if you're silent, you're complicit.[90]

Boyd's language invites congregants to join him in picturing themselves at the scene of the crime and join the other bystanders by metaphorically crying out against the murder of Floyd. Whether the addition of that White voice to the voices of the other objecting bystanders would have prevented Floyd's death is impossible to know, but this language invites White congregants to adopt a subjectivity in which their citizenship in the kingdom of God carries the moral responsibility of use earthly privileges to stand against the injustice in front of them lest they become complicit by their silence. This line of reasoning supplies congregants with a moral impetus for the forms of racial advocacy that pastors call for elsewhere in the sermons.

A biblical notion of the divine image also serves Boyd's critique of ideologies rooted in socially-constructed, White-centric racial categories. Boyd argues that the call for "biblical justice" originates in the very first chapter of the Bible, which states that God "made human

beings in his image."[91] He contrasts this with what he describes as the "ancient eastern" notion that only a king bears the image of God and with the notion of "plural races," which he describes as a "White Western construct thing that was created in the 17th, 18th century to justify treating other human beings as non-human."[92] Though dealt with only briefly in the sermons, this concept offers congregants a subjectivity for which racial injustice is an affront to the divine image that God intends for all of humanity to recognize in one another.

Synthesizing his cluster of metaphors into constitutive guidance, Woodland Hills's race sermons invite the congregation to inhabit the subjectivity of a "kingdom person." Notably, this subjectivity is more explicitly named and described to the audience than the subjectivities offered to congregants at the churches I discussed in the previous case studies. Briefly describing what it means to be a kingdom person in "Revolting Against the Powers," Boyd asks congregants to reject a view of agency that explains away racial inequities as solely the result of individual choices. He states that "God holds people individually accountable for the choices they make. But we also find that the Bible does not endorse an ideology of individualism. Not at all."[93] "That alone," he argues, "ought to make every kingdom person suspicious about any narrative that completely focuses either on the individual choice or only on the systems."[94] This language suggests that a kingdom person must attempt to balance an understanding of individual choice with an understanding of systemic influences in the process of evaluating the crisis around them. In this sermon, Boyd's description of a kingdom subjectivity that holds a balanced view of human agency is simply a prelude to his deployment of a metaphor of spiritual powers and principalities that I have already discussed. However, the call to become a kingdom person who challenges racism becomes more explicit in Moore's June 21 sermon, "Responding to the Powers." Moore presents the kingdom person as an explicitly antiracist identity and invites

congregants to become "kingdom people doing the work of antiracism," an identity that she later describes as an "antiracist peacemaker."[95] The term "antiracist" was popularized in the work of author Ibram X. Kendi, who contrasts antiracism's active pursuit of racial equality and opposition to racist ideas and practices against the problematic colorblindness of discourses and policies that claim to be "not racist."[96] For Moore, being a "kingdom person" means blending antiracism with a peacemaking approach based upon Christ's teachings. She describes an antiracist peacemaker as someone who "combines the challenge to dismantle White supremacy with our calling to be peacemakers who reflect Jesus's sacrificial love."[97] Her sermon provides a vivid example of what that means in practical terms.

Moore invites auditors to emulate Christ's humility by meaningfully engaging in social efforts to achieve racial justice. She begins this line of reasoning by describing Christ's act of washing his disciples' feet as a subversion of the ancient custom of a slave or subordinate performing the demeaning task of washing their master's feet of the filth accumulated by wearing sandals while walking on dusty, dung-strewn roads.[98] While Moore's emphasis on spiritual practices like prayer may do little to challenge evangelicals to move beyond their existing practices, she links the example of Christ to racial activism by describing her own participation in a racial justice protest that "stood out" to her as the "best picture of a modern-day foot washing."[99] She describes a protest walk in which "the Black clergy would get out in front and then the White clergy would get behind, and then their congregations and their community would pull up the rear."[100] She adds,

> As I was walking, I kept praying for those White pastors behind me who, in their own way, were washing our feet or saying, 'you guys are tired. You're tired of not being listened to. You're tired of seeing people that look like you suffer and die, and we are going to be a part of ending it. We are behind you.'[101]

Here Moore uses foot washing as a metaphor for the support that White Christians can show for Black community members by physically participating in protests in a way that shows deference to the Black leadership. While the mobile image of walking in the back of a protest line rather than the front could suggest avoidance of the risks associated with being on the front lines of a protest, here Moore specifies that the White clergy and congregants who did so were engaging in a form of metaphoric "foot washing" by demonstrating a humble willingness to "come to this space to learn from Black leaders about what is going on in our city, in our country, around race."[102] By presenting peaceful participation in antiracist activism as a form of "foot washing," Moore suggests that White Christians can live in righteous imitation of Christ by humbly participating in Black-led protests. For those who adopt this subjectivity, to engage in antiracist activity is to fulfill the gospel call to become like Christ.

Moore further illustrates what it means to be an antiracist peacemaker with a mobility metaphor of posture. She describes antiracist peacemaking as adopting a "posture" that entails willingness to "learn instead of digging our heels in, lament instead of being indifferent, and live together instead of apart."[103] This metaphoric language uses the image of a physical posture to depict the appropriate attitude to utilize while responding to the racial crisis in the Twin Cities.[104] Moore further illustrates that attitude with an example from her ministry life. She describes concluding a blog post about Trayvon Martin's death with an invitation that resulted in an inbox full of written prayers from White women along with comments like "I don't ever really talk about race, but I love you and I'm willing to write a prayer" and "I have been thinking about Trayvon Martin since I first heard about it."[105] Moore describes these notes as an example of the posture of humility and unity that she wants auditors to emulate. She also explains that the comments that she received reminded her of a painting she once saw of "a warrior going into

battle, taking off their armor, kneeling, and then lifting cupped hands."[106] She describes the painting as a reminder to "resist the urge to fight each other and kneel and raise our hands, awaiting marching orders and the proper spiritual armor."[107] This language presents metaphorically "disarming" through prayer and humility, rather than "arming" for culture war conflict, as the appropriate approach to racial tensions. In stark contrast to the warlike imagery that I analyzed in Chapter 2, Moore's deployment of this metaphor asks congregants to focus on learning and humility rather heroically taking charge and restoring order. Her metaphor's emphasis on spirituality and disarmament could imply that congregants should simply avoid engaging with the tense social environment around them, but her call to imitate Christ by participating bodily in racial activism provides a check against those who would draw that conclusion.

Taken together, the cluster of kingdom metaphors in Woodland Hills's race sermons mediate the theology of the kingdom of God and Christ's example into guidance to inhabit the subjectivity of an antiracist peacemaker who actively opposes the systems and attitudes that led to George Floyd's death. This subjectivity rejects what it perceives as attempts by other groups to co-opt Christian identity for political purposes by positing a hierarchy of earthly and divine kingdoms that, when properly understood, prompts Christians to use their earthly privileges in service to the cause of the oppressed. Rather calling congregants to cultural warfare, these metaphors invite congregants to metaphorically "disarm" themselves and embrace the challenge of remaking society through antiracist activity carried out with a Christlike posture of humility and service.

Overall, Woodland Hills's George Floyd sermons deployed clusters of metaphors that guided congregants to navigate the racial crisis by inhabiting the subjectivity of antiracist

peacemakers. A cluster of sin metaphors mediated evangelical theology about sin and atonement into critiques of White supremacy and a biblical call for racial unity. A cluster of metaphors based upon the concept of *kairos* used biblical narratives of courageous challenges to structures of oppressive power and organic metaphors of vulnerability to lend urgency to the call to seize the moment by striking a fatal blow against White supremacy. A cluster of metaphors based upon the concept of a cosmic space inhabited by spiritual powers challenged the evangelical tendency to offer individualistic interpretations of racial disparities and invited congregants to engage in spiritual warfare against the evils manifested in systemic racism. Finally, a cluster of kingdom metaphors explicitly offered congregants a "kingdom person" subjectivity to inhabit and guided them towards antiracist peacemaking as an approach to spiritual warfare that involves both spiritual practices like prayer and discussion as well as material forms of intervention like donating to racial justice charities and participating in protests and cleanup efforts. This kingdom person subjectivity contrasts with the inward-looking subjectivities offered to congregations at the churches that I analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3. Like those subjectivities, Woodland Hills's subjectivity has implications for race relations.

Metaphor, Theology, and Antiracism

As with the previous two case studies, I searched for public discourse that would reveal how Woodland Hills's race rhetoric was received as the church navigated the crisis in the Twin Cities. In an interview from December of 2021, Boyd states that the church "lost some people" as a result of speaking about race in the weeks following George Floyd's death.[108] I was unable to find any direct statements from those congregants, but Boyd attributes their decision to leave to the "offensive edge" of the church's racial justice-focused gospel message: "If your gospel

doesn't have some offensive edge to it, you've got to wonder if you're preaching the gospel."[109] This statement suggests that some auditors may have rejected the subjectivity offered to them in Woodland Hills's race rhetoric, but it appears that the church continued to engage in charity efforts designed to alleviate the suffering of marginalized community members despite those numeric losses. Woodland Hills participated in Transform Minnesota's neighborhood cleanup efforts in the weeks following Floyd's death, and Woodland Hills clergy were involved in discussions hosted by the organization about how to build long-term relationships between evangelical megachurches and churches serving economically and racially marginalized communities.[110] The extent of congregants' participation in those cleanup efforts cannot be determined from available information, but the church reports that it collected $30,745 for Transform Minnesota's One Fund, exceeding its goal of $25,000.[111] By the end of 2020, Woodland Hills had begun offering shelter to people experiencing homelessness through a "tiny homes" housing project.[112] The church also continues to speak about race from the pulpit.[113] These actions are consistent with the socially engaged subjectivity that Woodland Hills's sermons offered to auditors. As with the previous two chapters, however, I am more concerned with the constitutive implications of the church's rhetoric.

Woodland Hills's rhetoric invites the congregation to inhabit a subjectivity that sees evangelical theology as a call to challenge White supremacy and systemic racism by presenting racial justice work as an organic extension of evangelicals' most foundational theological beliefs. Significantly, these sermons invite the congregation to view a mission to achieve racial unity as a present-day implication of the gospel message rather offering them a perspective that views racial unity as a future outcome of eschatology. For this subjectivity, part of the process of achieving racial unity is acknowledging evangelicalism's historical attempts to theologically

rationalize racial injustice as a form of heretical complicity with spiritual evil. This subjectivity also entails a commitment to becoming educated about the effects of systemic phenomena like redlining and racialized policing in the Twin Cities and beyond. As a whole, the metaphoric clusters in Woodland Hills's sermons attempt to offer congregants a subjectivity that views both personal spiritual practices like prayer and socially-engaged racial justice work as appropriate means of transforming society to reflect a Christian vision of racial justice, thereby suggesting that evangelicals do not have to abandon their theological and spiritual commitments to embrace that cause. Analysis of that constitutive work offers scholars who study evangelicalism and other Christian traditions insights into the role of metaphors in theological discourse.

This analysis demonstrates that metaphors offer rhetors a potent but fraught tool for mediating the fundamental theological commitments of a religious group into constitutive guidance to challenge the racial status quo. The metaphoric content of Boyd's and Moore's sermons evince an effort to play the role of Ivie's trickster by reaching for metaphors that challenge congregants to adopt a shifted perspective about racial justice while simultaneously affirming their congregation's established ways of thinking and acting enough to avoid alienation and rejection.[114] While the church's sermons retain emphases on personal salvation and religious lifestyle that are typical of evangelical rhetoric, the metaphors deployed in the sermons invite congregants to undergo a shift in perspective by linking their established theology to a Social Gospel-style emphasis on reform. By using original sin as a metaphor for White supremacy and linking the atonement to the biblical metaphor of the "dividing wall" of racial hostility, Boyd mediates theologies to which evangelicals hold fundamental commitments into calls to participate in social intervention against racism. Likewise, Moore's treatment of the spiritual warfare metaphor invites congregants to link their belief in a supernatural battle between good

and evil to a commitment to antiracism. This approach has the affordance of drawing upon theologies to which religious auditors already hold deep commitments, enabling a savvy preacher to stay within the "conceptual boundaries" that are acceptable to the sensibilities of their religious auditors.[115] At the same time, however, this approach risks failing to provide what Ivie describes as a sufficiently "sharp edge."[116] While the sermons provide examples of and calls to bodily participation in racial justice work, they also hold up conventional spiritual practices like prayer as effective strategies for addressing the racial crisis. Whether that edge cut deeply enough is a matter of audience reception; available evidence suggests that at least some congregants at Woodland Hills contributed to Transform Minnesota's social justice initiatives, but it is certainly possible that others were content to pray, have conversations about race, and do little else. From a constitutive perspective, the sermons invite the congregation to inhabit a socially engaged subjectivity, but that subjectivity also includes an element of the same assurance in the correctness and social effectiveness of their spiritual practices that I observed in the sermons that I analyzed in Chapters 2 and 3.

This analysis also suggests that the centrality of a theological commitment being metaphorically mediated may be an important consideration for religious rhetors attempting to negotiate the tension between using a metaphor with a sufficiently sharp "edge" to challenge existing commitments and avoiding the "sheer antagonism and alienation" that may result from taking that challenge too far.[117] Metaphoric mediations of theology that evangelical auditors perceive to be violations of the inerrant scripture are likely to be rejected. Boyd's willingness to reinterpret the theology of the atonement, a core tenet of evangelical theology, as a call to racial unity may be one of the reasons that some congregants chose to leave Woodland Hills following the church's George Floyd sermons. Rhetors may be able to mitigate that kind of rejection by

cautiously approaching the presentation of a mediating metaphor. Such caution is evident in the way that Boyd's June 7 sermon establishes God's plan for racial unity through references to Abraham, Isaiah, and Christ before linking racial unity to the atonement. Likewise, Boyd's use of original sin as a metaphor for White supremacy in America comes only after a vivid description of the brutality of George Floyd's death and a comparison of Chauvin to Cain. Rhetors attempting to "dissent" against a religious group's accepted ways of thinking by offering auditors a metaphoric shift in perspective may benefit from first constructing a cluster of supporting metaphors that builds upon theological commitments that are less central to their auditors' established way of thinking. This strategy may help the religious rhetor negotiate the tensions inherent in Ivie's metaphoric shift. A cluster criticism perspective helpfully calls attention to the ways that a rhetor may coordinate metaphors with one another while attempting to produce such shifts. Scholars of religious rhetoric should pay close attention to how rhetors deploy clusters of metaphors in the process of navigating and challenging the "conceptual boundaries" of auditors' beliefs.[118] Metaphors have the potential to mediate core theological commitments of groups like evangelicals who are typically resistant to social justice messages into antiracist commitments, but doing so is a delicate process that risks producing alienation on the one side and failing to prompt meaningful change on the other.

This analysis also suggests that metaphors of spiritual warfare offer a productive but potentially fraught alternative to biblical narratives of interethnic warfare, particularly when those metaphors of spiritual warfare situate the ground of battle upon a spiritual plane. Carefully-chosen metaphors of spiritual warfare may serve as a constitutive tool for inviting auditors to challenge harmful ideologies with nonviolent methods. Violence and warfare metaphors are powerful tools for making sense out of disorienting situations.[119] They can create vivid moral

contrasts and justify aggressive action against those portrayed as savage enemies or, in the case of religious auditors, against those portrayed as enemies of God.[120] In Chapter 2, I problematized metaphors that likened religious auditors navigating the racial crisis to combatants in a biblical space of ethnic warfare. Woodland Hills's sermons are also rife with metaphoric images of warriors, axes, daggers, kingdoms, and strongholds. However, those aggressive images are moderated by language that shifts the plane of battle from a material space to a spiritual one and tells evangelicals that their battle is with spiritual entities rather than flesh and blood. Unlike Substance's use of an invading army metaphor to characterize the church's relationship to the community, Boyd and Moore commend prayer, dialogue, and participation in racial justice work as the appropriate methods for confronting White supremacy. While this metaphor invites congregants to direct whatever negative feelings they have about the racial crisis towards evil entities and ideologies, a consequence of their decision to shift the ground of the racial justice "battle" into a spiritual domain is that it could also discourage auditors from participating in materially effective racial justice work. Scholars of evangelical discourse should pay careful attention to the transformative and destructive power of metaphors of warfare, violence, and enmity, but they are also well-advised to consider where metaphors of spiritual conflict may help, or hinder, calls to participate in racial reform work. The domain in which a metaphor spatially situates the field of battle may exert a profound influence on what auditors will embrace as the appropriate means of engaging in that battle.

Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates the importance of pairing metaphors with clear and specific guidance about how to act upon their implications. Woodland Hills's sermons contain dramatic, if also mixed, metaphors that situate auditors as strategically poised to strike a critical blow to the "root" or "beast" of White supremacy. Along with that dramatic imagery,

Boyd and Moore also offer auditors practical steps that they can take to deliver that blow: participating in a Black-led protest or march, becoming educated about systemic racism, getting involved in cleanup efforts, donating to a racial equity-focused charity, and engaging in prayer and spiritual conversations with others about the realities of race in America. Unlike most of the sermons that I analyzed in previous chapters, that list includes both routine spiritual practices like prayer *and* socially engaged action rather than elevating one category of methods over the other. These calls to action harmonize with the constitutive work performed by the metaphoric mediations of theology present in the sermons. If evangelicals embrace a theology like Boyd's in which the Christ's atonement offers both individual salvation from personal sin and social salvation from racial division, then congregants who also embrace the conversionistic and moral reform aspects of evangelical theology might find motivation in their beliefs for participation in both categories of practices. The sermons hint towards the limits of participation in such reform efforts in that the programs commended to auditors are primarily clergy-led. However, increased participation in any effective effort to care for communities affected by racial disparities is a positive step towards addressing evangelicalism's longstanding whiteness and its historical divisions from racially diverse communities. Even metaphors that are inelegant or mixed can perform productive constitutive work if they provide evangelical congregations with an impetus for answering calls to effective action.

Along similar lines, these sermons illustrate how concrete detail and description can bolster the constitutive work performed by metaphors within theological discourse. Baker's discussion of systemic racism lends solidity to the theological argument Boyd makes about the influence of powers and principalities. This portion of the sermon guides auditors in linking the realities of systemic racism and phenomena like redlining and racialized policing in the Twin

Cities to the comparatively abstract metaphor of invisible spiritual influences that the sermon also asks auditors to accept. In the absence of concrete explanations about how societal phenomena reflect the theology presented in a text, evangelicals may find it reasonable to resort to a view of eschatological pessimism that trusts God sort out the societal problems while they take solace in their individual salvation. If, however, rhetors link the comparatively abstract theological propositions that religious auditors hear from the pulpit to localized realities of racial injustice, those auditors may find reason to respond in materially effective ways. While I have raised the possibility that auditors could take in the range of spiritual and material actions that these sermons commend to them as effective responses to racism and focus on the spiritual practices alone, Boyd's emphasis on the moral obligation to protest racial injustice despite the deadly risk posed by COVID-19 and Moore's emphasis on emulation of Christ's foot washing through participation in racial justice protests both suggest that a follower of Christ should respond to the injustice on display in Floyd's death by joining bodily with marchers and protestors. This approach is by no means novel; Social Gospel teachings have linked Christian theology to participation in that type of advocacy for decades. What Woodland Hills offers is a helpful, if imperfect, model of how metaphor may be used to mediate evangelicalism's distinctive theological emphases into a foundation for Social Gospel-style engagement. Implemented skillfully, this type of theological discourse carries the potential to propel forward the conversations that evangelicalism needs to have about its relationship to racial justice.

Concluding Thoughts

Woodland Hills is, by the admission of Senior Pastor Greg Boyd, more progressive and charismatic than other evangelical churches. Boyd acknowledges that being a "quasi-charismatic,

Anabaptist, peace, social action church" gives Woodland Hills an "odd" position within the evangelical landscape.[121] This means that the racial messaging that some Woodland Hills congregants found objectionable enough to prompt their departure from the church may be received even less warmly in churches closer to evangelicalism's theologically and socially conservative mainstream. Nevertheless, Woodland Hills's race rhetoric provides a demonstration of an approach to theological argumentation that has the potential to shift evangelicalism towards antiracist thinking.

Metaphors can, if used carefully in light of existing theological commitments, mediate evangelical theology into guidance to embrace social engagement with racial justice issues as an extension of evangelicals' deeply held beliefs about sin and redemption. This type of messaging may result in rejection from auditors who perceive it as contradictory to the message of the inerrant scripture. Boyd concluded that this is why congregants left Woodland Hills. It is possible that other factors contributed to those departures; the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a surge in virtual service options that enabled congregants to easily change their preferred house of worship, and U.S. church attendance declined generally during the pandemic.[122] If Boyd's assessment is correct, however, then both Woodland Hills and Bethlehem Baptist Church saw departures of either pastors or congregants because of the race rhetoric coming from the pulpit. If enough churches experience similar shakeups, then shifts in the evangelical landscape could occur as congregants subsequently integrate into congregations that better reflect their racial sensibilities. This could produce evangelical churches that are increasingly characterized by a commitment to one of two divergent forms of evangelicalism: one that draws increasingly inward and takes comfort from established practices while rejecting calls to racial justice as a threatening disruption, and one that looks increasingly outward for opportunities to address racial

injustice with socially-engaged reform work. This possibility highlights the importance of how pastors negotiate the tensions between challenging and affirming how their congregants think about the intersections of race and theology.

The metaphors that evangelicals encounter in the theological discourses that they hear from the pulpit are a vitally important influence on the subjectivities that they inhabit. This analysis indicates that metaphors can be used to guide evangelicals to take actions that improve the relationships between their churches and marginalized communities for the better, but it also points to the rhetorical constraints faced by the pastors who offer their congregations that guidance. Changing how evangelical congregations think about and respond to calls for racial justice is no small order, but one benefit of evangelicalism's overall lack of a denominational structure is that many pastors and church leaders are positioned to directly influence their churches' conventional approaches to race without being censured by a denominational hierarchy. The downside of that arrangement is that pastors may face greater pressure to adhere to the sensibilities of the congregations whose support empowers them lest they risk alienation. The willingness of pastors at Woodland Hills to initiate theological conversations about race and model participation in racial justice activism despite that pressure is a hopeful sign for those who wish to see evangelicals exert a healing influence within the American racial landscape. In the next chapter, I conclude this dissertation by revisiting the prompts that preceded this analysis and synthesizing insights from my case studies for scholars and rhetors navigating those theological conversations.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the preceding case studies, I investigated how clusters of metaphors within the sermon series of three Twin Cities evangelical megachurches mediated theology into guidance for congregants navigating the racial crisis that unfolded in the Twin Cities following the murder of George Floyd. Using metaphoric cluster criticism to analyze the constitutive work occurring beneath the surface of calls to love and racial unity yielded insights into how clusters of metaphors construct and invite auditors to inhabit racially significant subjectivities characterized by various modes of response to race issues ranging from antagonistic and apathetic to empathetic and socially engaged. I specifically sought to understand how the constitutive guidance offered to auditors within the theological argumentation of evangelical megachurch sermons invited auditors to act in response to the racial crisis and its disruption of the racial status quo of American society. Textual theology, the notion that rhetorical texts contain textually-observable language that mediates theological traditions and the rhetor's personal theology into interpretive guidance for auditors, provided a conceptual foundation for my reading of those sermons.[1] I proposed that metaphors play a crucial role in theological discourse by mediating foundational theological commitments into varying constitutive guidance and supported that proposal by identifying how megachurch pastors deployed metaphoric clusters that mediated theologies like the atonement and biblical images and narratives of endurance, ethnic conflict, and moral courage into divergent guidance to their congregations as they navigated the racial crisis in the Twin Cities. Space and mobility metaphors are worth of attention from scholars of evangelicalism and evangelical discourse because they play a crucial

role within that mediation of theology by influencing the methods and urgency with which the sermons invited auditors to respond to the crisis.

This final chapter articulates this dissertation's contributions to rhetorical studies of evangelical discourse. These contributions concern the role that metaphoric clusters and space and mobility metaphors play within the theological and racial discourse of evangelical megachurches. To provide context for those contributions, the following sections briefly summarize the preceding chapters and then highlight meaningful patterns and distinctions that scholars who study evangelical discourse should attend to when reading metaphor use within the context of evangelicalism's theological and racial discourse. Next, I articulate my dissertation's response and specific contributions to scholarly conversations regarding evangelical discourse. In the final paragraphs, I conclude with insights into the implications of this rhetoric for evangelicalism's relationship to race moving forward and for the relationships between evangelical megachurches and the racially diverse communities that surround them.

Revisiting Evangelical Race Rhetoric

Chapter 1 called attention to the deployment of clusters of metaphors, including space and mobility metaphors, by evangelical megachurch pastors providing guidance to auditors during the racial crisis in the Twin Cities. I proposed that these metaphors played a crucial role in mediating the theology that evangelicals derive from the biblical texts that they hold to be inerrant into guidance for responding to social issues like race and racial injustice. I also argued that metaphoric cluster criticism would offer valuable insights into how theological discourse and the metaphors within it perform racially significant constitutive work. A constitutive perspective recognizes that discourse may position auditors in ways that contradict the calls to

action also present in that discourse. Because evangelical social issue rhetoric has historically worked to produce acceptance of the racial status quo in American society, I set out to explore how the rhetoric that emerged out of the surge race rhetoric sparked by George Floyd's death would address the challenge to the status quo presented by the circumstances of that death and the crisis that followed. I proposed that the metaphors that evangelical megachurch congregations heard from the pulpit would play a crucial role within their race rhetoric by mediating theology into guidance to adopt subjectivities characterized by divergent approaches to responding to the racial crisis and engaging with their neighbors.

Chapter 2 consisted of a case study that examined the George Floyd sermons of Substance church, a multi-site megachurch that began in the suburbs of the Twin Cities and recently expanded into downtown Minneapolis with the acquisition of a historic church campus. There, a pastor and two guest preachers used two biblical spaces of ethnic conflict, Samaria and Jericho, as metaphors for the racial crisis in the Twin Cities. I argued that the clusters of metaphors in these sermons offered congregants an appealingly heroic but socially disengaged subjectivity. The Samaria sermons of Jimmy Rollins and Tim Timberlake contained clusters of metaphors that positioned evangelicals as the true victims of the crisis and heroes offering a message of salvation while portraying the residents of the community surrounding Substance as undesirable, morally inferior Samaritans. Haas's Jericho sermons cast the congregation in the role of Joshua and the Israelites, an invasion force following an unintuitive and conventionally ineffective strategy given to them by God for that conquest. A cluster of metaphors based upon static imagery blunted the constitutive work of the conquest and victimization clusters into a defensive subjectivity that takes comfort in the church's existing spiritual practices and beliefs. Offered alongside metaphors based upon narratives of individual faith and perseverance, this

subjectivity reifies the social status quo by inviting the congregation to adopt an individualistic perspective that blames oppression on the marginalized person's lack of faith and holds them responsible for saving themselves by turning to God. This constitutive work invites the congregation to inhabit a subjectivity that responds to race issues with confidence that an individualistic message of salvation is the only solution that a failing society needs. This concluding chapter discusses rhetorical alternatives that could aid Substance in becoming more socially engaged.

Chapter 3 engaged in a metaphoric cluster criticism of the George Floyd sermons of Bethlehem Baptist Church, a megachurch that subsequently experienced controversies over the subjects of empathy, race, and abuse. These controversies led to staffing changes and formed the backdrop for the multi-site church's decision to split into three separate congregations. I argued that the church's sermon series on how to respond to the suffering caused by the racial crisis offered the congregation clashing subjectivities in relation to race issues. Jason Meyer's message deployed clusters of metaphors that invited congregants to inhabit a Social Gospel-oriented subjectivity that would respond to the suffering and outrage caused Floyd's murder with demonstrations of solidarity. The next Sunday, Dave Zuleger invited the congregation to inhabit a comforting but myopic subjectivity by deploying clusters of metaphors that portrayed experiencing racial oppression as voluntary, depicted racial minority congregants and their concerns about racism as burdens to White congregants, and invited congregants to embrace restful assurance in an eschatological vision of a post-racial future in heaven. Kenny Stokes's sermon from the next Sunday used clusters of metaphors that invited auditors to embrace a status quo-supporting subjectivity that dismisses disruptions of the racial status quo as the behavior of

enemies, views religious pronouncements as an effective means of achieving social progress, and reifies racialized expectations of forgiveness that confine the burden of dealing with remorseless racialized violence to its victims. Though Meyer's sermon offers a picture of a type of evangelical theological discourse with racially reformative potential, the clashing subjectivities offered to the congregation in the sermons of his colleagues laid a discursive foundation that was fitting for the church's subsequent controversies that resulted in the ouster of pastors, including Meyer, who were accused by the church's elders of being too sensitive to the concerns of victims of abuse and racial oppression.

In Chapter 4, I studied metaphoric clusters in the George Floyd sermons of Woodland Hills Church, a St. Paul megachurch characterized by a hybrid model of online and offline church attendance and engagement in several forms of ministry to economically and racially marginalized community members. Clusters of metaphors in the sermons of Greg Boyd and Osheta Moore invited the congregation to adopt an antiracist subjectivity characterized by a Christian emphasis on peacemaking. Metaphors figured White supremacy as a grievous sin, used biblical narratives of courage against oppression to offer auditors a picture of the need for timely intervention against systemic racism, and invited congregants to engage in spiritual warfare against hateful ideologies. The series culminated in an explicit call to adopt the antiracist subjectivity of a "kingdom person" who seeks racial healing by imitating Christ's posture of humility. The sermons attempted to negotiate a balance between challenging evangelicals to become socially engaged in material forms racial justice work while also affirming their established belief in spiritual practices like prayer as effective means of achieving social change. By metaphorically shifting the space of spiritual warfare from an earthly domain to a heavenly one, the sermons risked elevating spiritual practices over much needed forms of material

intervention as the most effective means of addressing the ultimate causes of the racial crisis. Woodland Hills's sermons offered a helpful, if imperfect, example of a type of evangelical theological discourse that has the potential to remediate evangelicalism's historic whiteness and begin breaking down the divisions between predominantly White megachurches and the racially diverse communities around them.

These case studies demonstrated the crucial constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors as they mediated evangelical theology into divergent guidance for how to respond to the racial crisis and the persistent systemic racism highlighted by George Floyd's murder. In the next section, I compare and contrast these sermons to trace meaningful differences between types of metaphor use that perform constitutive work that supports the status quo and those performing constitutive work that challenges it.

Evangelical Metaphor Use and the Racial Status Quo

In the preceding chapters, meaningful differences emerged between forms of evangelical metaphor use that invited auditors to inhabit subjectivities that reify the racial status quo and forms of metaphor use inviting auditors to adopt subjectivities that productively challenge it. The sermons all came from churches that stated commitments to the same foundational tenets of evangelical theology, voiced opposition to racial injustice, and commended love for others regardless of racial identity as the appropriate Christian response to the racial crisis. Despite those similarities, the clusters of metaphors within the sermons performed constitutive work that diverged in a variety of directions regarding the subjectivities that it invited congregants to inhabit. I conclude from this that the clusters of metaphors that evangelicals deploy within their theological discourse play a crucial role within evangelical social issue rhetoric by mediating

theology into varying types of guidance. The following paragraphs illustrate that crucial role by explicating differences both in *which* metaphors were deployed and *how* those metaphors were deployed to contribute to rhetorical scholarship's understanding of metaphor use and its constitutive influence. First, differences in the urgency of the guidance offered to evangelicals for responding to the racial crisis stemmed from differences in metaphoric treatments of time.

Metaphor, Eschatology, and Time

Different metaphoric treatments of time in the sermons that I studied offered evangelical congregations differing perspectives on the urgency and relevance of taking action to address racial injustice. In some cases, space and mobility metaphors mediated eschatology, theology about the end times, into guidance towards a passive and nonurgent view of the racial crisis. Zuleger's metaphoric language framed racial justice as an inevitable outcome of Christ's sacrifice and offered auditors restful assurance in eschatological visions of a post-racial future. In the process, it offered congregants a subjectivity that could safely ignore the need for racial dialogue in their own congregation and for material engagement with the suffering community around them. It is possible that a rhetor might offer an audience an image of a future of racial unity to call auditors to act now to bring about that unity, but Zuleger's decision to graft a metaphor of rest into his footrace metaphor mediates that eschatology into a subjectivity that views present-day racial injustice as reason to draw restful assurance from their belief in salvation and passively wait for Christ to bring about that future. Likewise, Haas's treatment of the miraculous collapse of Jericho's walls invited congregants to view present-day social advocacy as ineffective in comparison to less "intuitive" strategy of praying and simply trusting God that things would work out in the end. Metaphors that pointed auditors to the future and, more specifically, to

visions of future racial harmony achieved through faith in God and without material intervention invited congregants to inhabit subjectivities characterized by a lack of urgency about responding to the racial crisis. Other articulations of time challenged the racial status quo.

Metaphors and supporting language invited auditors to inhabit subjectivities characterized by introspection and urgency regarding racial injustice by orienting auditors towards the past and present. Meyer's use of four-hundred seconds of suffocation as a symbol of four-hundred years of oppression experienced by Black Americans invited congregants to reflect on evangelicalism's complicity, and their own complicity, in America's long history of racial oppression. Boyd's original sin and heresy metaphors likewise mediated sin theology into a critical perspective regarding America's past. Metaphors that directed attention to the present served a complementary function to metaphors that emphasized the past by inviting congregants to respond to that weighty past with present-day urgency. Boyd and Moore used the concept of *kairos*, illustrated by the Esther narrative, to highlight the vital impact of timely intervention against racial oppression. In contrast to Zuleger's vision of God's kingdom and call to view Christ as a source of rest and assurance, Moore's "kingdom person" subjectivity invited congregants to imitate Christ's posture of humble service by working to achieve justice in the present. Working in concert with concrete examples of material intervention, these clusters of time-related metaphors invited congregants to view themselves as effectual agents who can meaningfully respond to a present-day crisis that reflects a problematic past.

This study contributes to scholarship regarding evangelical rhetoric by highlighting the role that metaphoric articulations of time play by mediating theology into perspectives regarding the urgency of race issues. This observation furthers Martin's work by identifying metaphors that

orient auditors ’attention to the past and present as productive alternatives to the eschatologically pessimistic rhetoric that invites auditors to fixate on a future consisting of inevitable social decline followed by an equally inevitable post-racial paradise. An emphasis on time is nothing new for studies of space and mobility discourse, but this study helpfully highlights the crucial role that metaphoric articulations of time play within theological discourse.[2] This study also contributes to studies of evangelical discourse by demonstrating that post-racial rhetoric lurks within the temporal metaphors deployed within evangelical theological discourse. Though Zuleger’s sermon diverges from the typical themes of post-racial rhetoric by acknowledging the existence of present-day racial injustice, his sermon attempts to render that present-day injustice irrelevant in light of a heavenly future. In that sense, this rhetoric could perhaps be described as “pre-post-racial.” This concept could provide a productive avenue of investigation for critics invested in evangelical discourse and other intersections of racial and religious discourse. Religious rhetors seeking to reaffirm the status quo need not convince their audiences that racial injustice does not exist in the present if they can convince them that racial injustice will ultimately prove irrelevant in light of their theology about the future. Attending to these and other metaphoric representations of time will offer rhetorical critics who investigate such discourse insights into whether it mediates theology into guidance to work now to achieve racial justice or into guidance to wait and trust that God will eventually sort things out. The metaphors deployed within megachurch sermons also differed in what they portrayed as the appropriate methods of engaging in racial justice work.

Metaphor, Mobility, and Method

The sermons that I studied all asked congregants to respond to the racial crisis in compassionate ways, but static and mobile metaphors in the sermons invited auditors to embrace

different methods of response. Each church's rhetoric emphasized the crucicentric theology of the gospel message, but clusters of metaphors delimited different ranges of appropriate action for that engagement.

At Substance, metaphors based upon static imagery invited congregants to maintain the status quo. The static metaphors of a light source and a well in Timberlake's and Rollins's sermons cast congregants in passive roles. Combined with Haas's portrayal of prayer as the most effectual means of achieving societal change and his portrayal of churches as victimized by COVID-19 lockdown orders, this metaphoric cluster invited congregants to inhabit a defensive subjectivity for which maintaining the church's spiritual practices, rather than social engagement or material intervention, is the best means of addressing the racial crisis. Such metaphors are likely to undermine rather than foster support for community-focused ministries like Substance's Manna Market grocery charity. By offering congregants subjectivities that focus on maintaining their existing practices, these forms of metaphor use sustain the racial status quo.

In contrast, metaphors of mobility based upon images of active movement towards others mediated evangelicalism's crucicentric emphasis on the gospel message into guidance towards engaging with the community through a blend of spiritual and material intervention. Meyer's metaphor of sitting in solidarity with those who are suffering, with the clarification that "sitting with" also means "standing up for," invited congregants to engage with victims of racial injustice. While his sermon could have done more to commend specific methods or opportunities for that participation, it takes a productive step within the context of evangelical racial discourse by even suggesting that such participation is theologically desirable. Meyer's subjectivity is consistent with the efforts of his colleague, Ming-Jinn Tong, to use a grocery ministry to serve

the economically marginalized communities most affected by the instability in the region. At Woodland Hills, Moore used images of a warrior setting aside earthly armaments and of Christ washing the feet of his disciples to invite the congregation to use spiritual practices to oppose evil in the abstract realm while embracing education, marching, dialogue, and other forms of racial advocacy in the material realm. The metaphor of a posture of humility, along with Moore's example of how White pastors and congregants demonstrated humility at a Black clergy-led protest, further emphasized the notion that Christlike service is to be performed through practical forms of engagement. The subjectivity that she and Boyd invited auditors to inhabit is consistent with the church's immigration and homelessness ministries as well as its participation in several of Transform Minnesota's racial justice initiatives.

For rhetorical critics, this aspect of my study reinforces the importance of looking beyond the immediate persuasive effects of a discourse to consider its constitutive implications. Understanding how evangelical theological discourse ultimately guides auditors to respond to social issues requires looking beyond the surface of persuasive calls to show compassion for others to consider the subjectivities offered to auditors by the metaphors within that discourse. Hostetler's and Leeman's essays both revealed that rhetoric that appears to have failed when considered for its immediate persuasive effects may perform constitutive work that proves transformative in the long term.[3] My study of evangelical race sermons indicates that the opposite is sometimes true; rhetoric that may appear to successfully call auditors to productive actions like loving their neighbors may simultaneously perform constitutive work that undermines those calls to action. Substance's sermons ask congregants to minister to the racially diverse community of downtown Minneapolis through the church's Manna Market food bank

ministry. Unfortunately, the same sermons direct invasive and denigrating metaphors towards that same community. Ministry leaders at Substance or at other organizations with similar practices could better align their constitutive discourse with their community outreach work by deploying metaphors that highlight the importance of practical material intervention and invite appreciation, not scorn, for community members. Rhetors, rhetorical critics, and scholars of evangelicalism alike should be alert to these kinds of misalignments between the constitutive work of a rhetor's metaphor use and the persuasive goals that the rhetor is attempting to achieve. The use of ill-fitting metaphors, especially when those metaphors cohere into clusters, may cultivate subjectivities that become meaningful barriers to positive change. The next area of contrast concerns individualistic treatments of theology.

Metaphor, Individualism, and Atonement

Another significant contrast in metaphor use within the sermons that I studied pertained to whom the metaphoric clusters in the sermons configured as ultimately responsible for addressing racial injustice. These metaphors mediate evangelical theology about conversionism, which promises comfort and spiritual guidance to those who accept the gospel message of Christ's atonement for sin, into divergent guidance to adopt subjectivities that view racial oppression through an individualistic lens, subjectivities that recognize the structural and systemic aspects of racism, subjectivities that embrace introspection about complicity in structural racism, and more.

Some clusters of metaphors deployed at Twin Cities megachurches invited auditors to view victims of racial injustice as responsible for bringing about and then enduring their own suffering. At Substance, historical narratives of personal faith were employed as representations of how to solve present-day race issues and framed the appropriate response to the racial crisis in

individualistic terms. Haas's June 14 sermon further illustrated his Jericho metaphor's treatment of submission to God with statements about how the personal faith of the Beethovens enabled them to overcome oppressive social and personal circumstances. These statements positioned those who are suffering, rather than those who are complicit in their suffering or society, as the agents responsible for changing the conditions of their oppression. At Bethlehem, Zuleger's sermon goes even further by deploying metaphors that inelegantly lump together historical and present-day victims of racial and religious oppression and then arguing that all made a calculated choice to suffer to receive rewards from God. These metaphors invite auditors to view the experience of racial oppression as a consequence of personal decisions or moral failings such as a lack of faith rather than as a consequence of systemic issues that require collaborative social intervention.

Along similar lines, a cluster of metaphors in Bethlehem's sermons also normalized the emotional burdens that racial injustice places on its victims. Zuleger's sermon mentions White congregants needing to "do better" at helping congregants with racial minority identities work through their experiences of racism, and Stokes broadly commends Christian love and forgiveness. However, both rhetors deploy metaphors of weight in ways that obligate victims of racial injustice to forgive and let go of those experiences lest they fail to imitate Christ's love for his enemies or hinder the church's journey by burdening White congregants with feelings of guilt. When read alongside Stokes's use of figurative language that euphemistically marked racial others as members of other "tribes" and potential enemies, the clusters of metaphors presented in these two sermons form a larger pattern of meaning that suggests that the burdens of racial injustice are rightly borne by people with racial minority identities. These metaphors

enable evangelical rhetors to present what may appear to be a message of compassion while reifying a status quo in which the pain experienced by members of racial minority groups as a result of systemic racism and racialized violence is an accepted fact of life that should be dealt with spiritually rather than an urgent problem requiring social intervention.

Meanwhile, clusters of metaphors that invited evangelicals to reject victim-blaming, consider their complicity in systemic injustice, and seek solidarity with victims of racial injustice challenged the racial status quo. These metaphors mediated conversionistic theology's emphasis on righteous living and imitation of Christ into guidance to reject White supremacy and victim-blaming as sins. In stark contrast to the sermons of his colleagues, Meyer used Job's innocence before God to commend a perspective that rejects blaming victims of racialized violence like George Floyd for their own suffering. He also used a cluster of navigational metaphors to call for moral clarity regarding the racial crisis, confessed his own complicity by failing to speak against injustice and invited congregants to do the same, and called for forms of solidarity that entail proximity to and care for those who suffer. Boyd likewise rejects victim-blaming with a cluster of metaphors based upon theological notions of sin that present evangelicalism as responsible for allowing itself to be a vessel of White supremacy, and Moore called congregants to metaphorically wash the feet of Black community members by participating in reform efforts. These metaphoric clusters mediate the conversionistic call to a morally upright lifestyle into guidance to embrace social action and compassion rather than blame for victims of racialized violence.

This observation contributes to rhetorical understandings of the discursive practices that sustain evangelicalism's whiteness. Evangelicalism's conversionistic theology emphasizes the individual's responsibility to accept the gospel message and live a moral life, and the movement's

theological investment in morally reforming society has long been shaped by an ideology of individualism.[4] In this case, metaphoric clusters in several sermons sustained that trend by placing the burden of responding to racial injustice on those most affected by it. This type of rhetoric is expedient for evangelical megachurches as it requires little from their primarily-White congregations other continuing to invite seekers to accept a personally reformative gospel message and maintaining the spiritual practices that constitute the life of the church. This harms the racial minority congregants whom it burdens with the unreasonable expectations of letting go of and shutting up about their experiences of racial injustice so that the White majority of the church can proceed unhindered by nagging questions about guilt, complicity, or the moral obligation to act. It also sustains evangelicalism's whiteness by discouraging much-needed dialogue about race within its congregations. The rhetoric that megachurches use to negotiate internal conflicts and discussions among congregants about experiences of racial injustice merits further investigation. For example, studying rhetoric related to Bethlehem's Racial Harmony Task Force and the Council of Elders 'response to its recommendations could lead to additional insights into how evangelical churches negotiate questions regarding complicity and the need for change in relation to race issues. The last area of contrast concerns violent language.

Metaphor, Violence, and Community Relations

Twin Cities megachurch sermons also deployed metaphors that offered contrasting treatments of the relationship between the church and the surrounding community. One problematic category of metaphor denigrates community members as moral inferiors while another positions them as targets of violence. Together, these clusters of metaphors form larger structures of meaning that offer rationalizations of systemic injustice by portraying the residents of urban space as abject others whose immorality justifies their suffering.

Several of the sermons that I studied deployed metaphors that cast members of the racially diverse communities surrounding their churches as moral inferiors. These metaphors played into racist spatial tropes that undergird the unjust treatment of the residents of urban spaces like Minneapolis. Substance's sermons deployed metaphors that portrayed those residents as promiscuous. While casting congregants in the heroic roles of Joshua and Christ, preachers at Substance used biblical characters associated with promiscuity to represent community members. Though evangelical theological discourse sometimes valorizes Rahab and the woman at the well as unlikely converts who show remarkable faith in God, rhetors at Substance also emphasized the sinful promiscuity that evangelicals attribute to these characters while using them to represent the racially diverse communities of the Twin Cities. In addition to sustaining spatial tropes that associate Black skin and urban space with dangerous and undesirable behavior, this cluster of metaphors specifically echoes the racist Jezebel trope that stereotypes Black women as promiscuous. Rhetoric portraying a group as unreasonable, savage, or morally inferior lays the groundwork for their mistreatment.[5] The harmful outcomes entailed by this type of discourse are especially vivid when read within the racialized context of American urban spaces and the murder of George Floyd.[6] Substance's sermons overtly condemn rather than voice support for racialized violence, but the metaphor use within them performs constitutive work that renders residents of the Twin Cities as abject figures and thereby supplies rationalizations for their mistreatment.

In contrast, clusters of metaphors that emphasized the unjust nature of racialized violence and invited sympathy, not judgment, for victims of oppression challenged the racial status quo. Boyd used the image of Abel's unjustly slain blood crying out to God to invite congregants to see George Floyd's death and the justice system in which it and countless other racialized killings

have occurred as morally outrageous. Similarly, Meyer used Job as a picture of innocent suffering and emphasized God's rejection of the condemnations that Job's friends later voiced when they sought in his behavior a theological explanation for his suffering. These metaphors stand in sharp contrast to metaphors in Substance's sermons that presented community members as abject figures and framed evangelicals as the "true" victims of the crisis. Instead of rationalizing racialized violence or cultivating perceptions of victimhood, Meyer, Boyd, and Moore deployed metaphors that invited congregants to adopt subjectivities that see the suffering experienced in the community around their church with concern and sympathy.

Another crucial component in these differing approaches to community relationships emerged in how rhetors deployed metaphors of violence. In some cases, metaphoric language situated church and community on opposing sides of a conflict. While using Jesus's interaction with the woman at the well to represent how Christians should try to reach their community, Rollins deploys a metaphor of infiltration that presents Christ as an aggressor towards the woman. Though Rollins's metaphor is awkwardly worded, it frames Christ as the infiltrator and positions the woman as the target of that act. Haas likewise describes his church's food bank ministry as an invasion of downtown Minneapolis. At Bethlehem, Stokes invites congregants to accept a radically expanded definition of "enemy" that includes anybody outside of your closest relationships and anyone of another "tribe." None of these sermons called for actual violence, and the clusters of violent metaphors in the sermons were often tempered by static metaphors. Often using awkward or ambiguous metaphoric language, these sermons positioned racial justice protestors, victims of racial injustice, or members of the racially diverse communities surrounding the megachurches as opponents of congregants who were positioned as invaders.

Read alongside metaphors that portray community members as moral inferiors, these metaphors cohere into larger structures of meaning that could rationalize racialized violence or contribute to the underlying resentments that fuel the Christian nationalism movement.[7]

Other messaging invited congregants to challenge the racial status quo with metaphors of violence that aligned church and community together in opposition to hatred and White supremacy. Rather than casting community members as targets of violence, these metaphors directed opposition towards those evil forces. Meyer, Boyd, and Moore drew upon Ephesians 6, a passage that evangelicals interpret as a call to engage in "spiritual warfare" against demonic forces that dwell in an unseen cosmic realm, to characterize how auditors should respond to the racial crisis. Citing this passage's reminder that Christians "wrestle not with flesh and blood," these rhetors used this metaphor to invite Christians to direct any feelings of hostility they have about the racial crisis towards the evil on display in George Floyd's death. Boyd vividly portrayed White supremacy as a beast into which evangelical congregants are to plunge a dagger and as a tree vulnerable to having an axe driven into its roots. These metaphors invite auditors to view the racial crisis as a critical moment of *kairos* in which to achieve a meaningful victory against White supremacy. The rhetorical deployment of this category of metaphors offers a productive but also fraught alternative to evangelical narratives of cultural warfare.

This dissertation highlights spiritual warfare metaphors within the context of evangelical social issue rhetoric as worthy of additional attention from scholars invested in evangelical discourse. Metaphors of spiritual warfare have the potential to serve as helpful alternatives to culture war narratives by inviting auditors to direct the feelings of hostility or tension caused by a social crisis away from other people groups and towards the evil spiritual and ideological influences that evangelical theology attributes to an unseen supernatural realm. They also

provide a spiritual rationale for participation in peaceful forms of antiracist advocacy. Rhetorical strategies that defuse culture war narratives deserve attention from rhetorical critics because of that rhetoric's socially erosive influence. However, this category of metaphor also spatially shifts the field of "battle" from the material domain to a spiritual one. Consequently, these metaphors could encourage auditors to view spiritual practices rather than material intervention as the best means of opposing systemic racism in their communities. Because this metaphor deals with warfare, I also envision that it could be used to attack other groups by labeling them as pawns or representatives of supernatural evil who could thus be either explicitly or implicitly marked as justifiable targets for mistreatment. Critics who take up this call should investigate additional cases of race rhetoric in which these metaphors are deployed to examine whether they serve harmful or helpful constitutive purposes.

This study also illustrates the value of reading violent metaphors within the context of the other metaphors present within a theological discourse. It is here that cluster criticism's emphasis on the coherence of metaphors into larger structures of meaning proves crucial. In this case, passive metaphors exerted a moderating influence on the violent metaphors present in the sermons at hand. Substance's congregants heard metaphors from the pulpit that cast them as conquering invaders, but they also heard static metaphors inviting them to operate passively as sources of water and light for those who seek them out. The latter cluster of metaphors offers auditors a less extreme means of acting upon the hostile implications of the former cluster. Evangelicals who accept this subjectivity can respond to antagonism between themselves and the surrounding community by turning inward, ignoring the suffering around them, and focusing on maintaining the internal life of the church. This blend of antagonism and passivity echoes the active-passivist pattern that Martin identified in her study of evangelical discourse. Active-

passivist discourse frames the world as doomed to inevitable social decline and emphasizes trusting in God's sovereignty over that decline, thereby providing evangelicals with a warrant for focusing on spreading a message of individualistic salvation while ignoring the broader social implications of their actions.[8] In a similar fashion, the blend of antagonism and passivity present in the metaphoric clusters that I studied offers evangelicals a warrant for viewing the surrounding culture as an enemy that victimizes the church while also seeing a defensive maintenance of existing spiritual practices as the most appropriate means of responding to that enmity. This discourages evangelicals from productive engagement in social reform. By identifying the moderating influence of passive metaphors in this discourse, I am by no means attempting to excuse the denigrating or violence-rationalizing constitutive work performed by the deployment of other metaphors. Rather, this observation points to the problematic production by evangelicals of discourse that is expedient for themselves while carrying grave constitutive consequences for others. Pastors who use this kind of rhetoric to promote their congregations 'way of life do so at the expense of promoting culture war hostilities with or apathy towards other publics.

Overall, this dissertation's case studies shed light upon the constitutive work performed by the metaphors deployed within evangelical theological discourse while also raising directions for further research. I have identified forms of metaphor use that sustain evangelicalism's whiteness and its separation from other publics as well as forms of metaphor use with the potential to help remedy those issues. Meanwhile, spiritual warfare metaphors warrant additional investigation by rhetorical critics for their ameliorative and erosive potential, and the rhetoric emerging from megachurches 'internal discussions of race could yield insight into how church leaders and thousands of congregants negotiate how their churches respond publicly to racial controversy. This dissertation is by no means a comprehensive catalogue of evangelical

metaphor use, and additional "models for appreciation, insights for possible emulation, and instances of abuse for condemnation" undoubtedly remain for further studies of evangelical theological, racial, and metaphoric discourse to uncover.[9] The next section articulates my dissertation's responses to rhetorical studies of evangelicalism and points to additional directions for continuing that work.

Response to Scholarship

This dissertation responds to scholarly calls for deeper understandings of evangelical theological rhetoric by offering insight into the constitutive work performed by clusters of metaphors within evangelical race rhetoric. Specifically, this dissertation responds to Martin's invitation to set aside texts by well-known evangelical rhetors to investigate the pulpit rhetoric that influences evangelicalism "writ large."[10] Analysis of sermons delivered at evangelical megachurches during the racial crisis in the Twin Cities revealed that this pulpit rhetoric constructed and offered racially significant subjectivities to congregants via the deployment of clusters of metaphors that included space and mobility metaphors. I extend Martin's work by demonstrating that metaphor use within evangelicalism sustains active-passivism by mediating its foundational theologies into this kind of guidance. Just as active-passivist rhetoric equips evangelical congregants to ignore the consequences of their political and social behavior in favor of trusting in God's sovereignty over societal decay, congregants who embrace socially disengaged and inward-looking subjectivities like those offered to them by some of the metaphoric clusters that I analyzed likewise find reassurance that maintaining the status quo of the church's spiritual life and gospel messaging is ultimately the ideal response to unjust social

conditions despite calls from racial justice advocates within Christianity such as the pastors of multiethnic and historically Black churches who I discussed in Chapter 1. Future studies of evangelical discourse should continue to explore the role that metaphors and clusters of metaphors play in guiding congregants to respond to social issues like race with passivity and a lack of concern for the consequences of their actions.

Furthermore, this dissertation contributes to scholarly conversations about the discourse that sustains evangelicalism's culture war approach to public engagement. For decades, evangelical rhetors have deployed metaphors that, by framing evangelicalism as the victim and target of a hostile public sphere, foster culture war antagonism with other publics.[11] Contemporary manifestations of that culture war language merit ongoing attention from rhetorical scholars in light of the White Christian nationalist movement's public resurgence.[12] Metaphors emphasizing evangelical victimhood and calling congregants to invade or take authority over secular culture echo what Dreyer and Kelly describe as a form of "necropolitical Christianity" enacted by the Christian nationalist movement to construct a "righteous demand to rule over the body politic."[13] This dissertation's case studies yielded insight into the types of metaphor use that shape whether evangelical pulpit discourse guides congregations towards exerting a healing influence on race relations or feeds into culture war antagonisms like those that fuel the Christian nationalist movement. The problematic metaphors within the sermons at hand may appear innocuous to evangelical auditors who are willing to overlook the occasional clumsy metaphor or strained application of a biblical text out of a charitable attitude towards a respected pastor. As metaphors accumulate, however, they may cohere into tangled structures of meaning that perform constitutive work that is damaging to the cause of racial justice. Critiquing problematic forms of evangelical metaphor offers scholars of evangelicalism a means of

untangling what Nakayama describes as the subtle but powerful ways in which whiteness problematically "entwines" itself with evangelical discourse.[14] Scholars of evangelicalism should be wary of how these tangled meanings are produced within megachurches and how the circulation of those meanings may fuel dangerous movements.

This dissertation also illustrates the value for scholars of evangelicalism of attending to Flores's call for "historically grounded analyses of race" that analyze rhetoric in light of the persistence of "race and racist thought within the nation" with the goal of helping rhetorical critics "better understand the contemporary moment."[15] I adopted this approach by grounding my reading of these sermons within the context of evangelicalism's history of using theological argumentation to defend the status quo regarding social issues such as race, contrasting evangelicalism's individualistic view of society and moral reform with the Social Gospel tradition's call to socially-engaged reform, and acknowledging evangelicalism's history of racist rhetoric ranging from the explicitly racist to the veiled and euphemistic. This approach enriched my reading of the texts at hand. For example, having a critical awareness of how evangelicals have previously used euphemistic terms like "ethnicity" to address race facilitated my reading of Stokes's use of terms like "tribe" and "persuasion" as coded references to race within his treatment of the concept of enemies. Likewise, an awareness of the divergences between evangelical and Social Gospel approaches to moral reform rhetoric helped me distinguish between the individualistic and socially-focused responses to racial injustice that the sermons commended to auditors. I also augmented my reading of evangelical race rhetoric by drawing upon scholarship regarding post-racial rhetoric, racial reconciliation rhetoric, and racialized forgiveness.[16] These areas of historical, rhetorical, and religious inquiry all shed valuable light on

evangelical race rhetoric's contemporary manifestations and are valuable avenues of inquiry for scholars invested in unpacking rhetoric's role in sustaining evangelicalism's "problem of whiteness."[17]

By explicating metaphor's role in mediating theology into guidance for navigating a racial crisis, this study offers rhetorical critics and scholars of evangelicalism a fruitful method for answering Flores's call to continue investigating race's "daily cultural, social, political, and popular manifestations."[18] I found that the metaphoric clusters deployed within evangelical theological discourse perform racially problematic constitutive work while avoiding language that is likely to read as explicitly racist to auditors. Metaphoric cluster criticism offers a useful approach to critiquing the subtler rationalizations of the racial status quo found within contemporary evangelical rhetorics of race by equipping the critic to look past surface of persuasive argumentation and consider the implications of the constitutive positioning of auditors and other subjects performed by the metaphors therein. This method could also be used to analyze the racially significant, subjectivity-shaping work performed by other metaphoric discourses. While this dissertation has focused on criticism race rhetoric within evangelical megachurches, metaphoric cluster analyses of Black Protestant preaching could examine the constitutive uses of metaphor in the process of articulating what House describes as "the prophetic witness of the Black Church" in relation to the message of the Black Lives Matter movement and other racial justice protests.[19] Such an analysis could provide additional contrast to the forms of metaphor use identified in this dissertation and would contribute to conversations about the types of metaphor use that might best help preachers within various Christian traditions oppose systemic racism. Furthermore, evangelicalism is not the only movement, religious or otherwise, with a problematic racial history. Historically grounded studies of the metaphoric

clusters deployed within the race rhetoric of other religious, social, or political movements would reveal more about the manifestations of race that continue shape the social landscape in America.

This dissertation also specifically points scholars of evangelicalism to the value of a space and mobility perspective for reading the harmful race rhetoric that lurks within evangelical discourse. In this dissertation, I took up Harris's call to develop new ways of reading the mobility-based rhetoric that lurks within public discourse and influences, often in a harmfully racialized fashion, the political subjectivities of people who inhabit urban spaces.[20] I chose to use metaphoric cluster criticism as a method for reading metaphors of space and mobility within evangelical sermons and identified the theological discourse of evangelical megachurches as a locus of lurking space and mobility discourse with racial implications. While not intended as a replacement for other methods of inquiry into discursive markers of space and mobility, metaphoric cluster criticism and a space and mobility perspective offer rhetorical studies of evangelicalism a useful emphasis on how metaphoric markers of space and mobility within evangelical theological rhetoric cohere into larger structures of meaning that have constitutive implications in relation to social issues such as race. This approach accentuates important features of and interactions among those discursive markers when they occur in a metaphoric form or context. This provided a helpful approach for examining unique features of evangelical race rhetoric, including how sermons blended clusters of metaphors based upon biblical spaces of ethnic conflict with metaphors based upon static imagery invited auditors to adopt subjectivities characterized by antagonism, defensiveness, and apathy, while clusters of metaphors based upon spiritual warfare against evil and images of movement towards others invited auditors to adopt subjectivities characterized by empathy and an investment in challenging White supremacy.

The specificity of this approach's emphasis on metaphor may mean that it has limited applicability given the variety of forms in which discursive markers of space and mobility manifest, but this dissertation demonstrates the value of such an approach in cases where discourse blends the language of space and mobility with clusters of metaphors.[21] Such metaphors were numerous within the rhetoric that Twin Cities evangelicals used to negotiate the relationship between their theology and their social values, and the metaphoric clusters in the sermons produced complex structures of meaning with implications that would be difficult to uncover without an approach that accounts for the multiplicity and complexity of those metaphoric formations. Studies of evangelical and conservative Christian discourses regarding other social issues like gender and sexuality, which contain themes of anxiety and victimhood similar to those found within evangelical racial discourse, could benefit from this approach.[22] Likewise, the rhetoric of other religious, political, or social movements may share this complexity, particularly when those groups navigate social crises or are bound together by doctrinal commitments. Those complicating factors invite the use of metaphors because they provide a linguistic tool for producing and navigating complex structures of meaning.[23] Additional studies that employ the approach developed in this dissertation to the rhetoric of such groups would provide further demonstration of its utility and applicability.

Finally, this dissertation also responds to Martin's call for scholars of evangelicalism to cultivate a "new and more nuanced conversation" about the language that evangelicals use to communicate about race.[24] Clusters of metaphors in the sermons of Meyer, Boyd, and Moore offer useful starting points for that conversation. Martin's emphasis on nuance is, in part, predicated on the diffuse nature of the problematic narrative patterns that she identified. The problematic constitutive work performed by some clusters of metaphors is similarly diffuse

because those metaphors are dispersed throughout discourses that contain positive-sounding statements about love and racial unity. It is possible that the problematic meanings that cohered within the sermons that I studied were the result of awkward wording stemming from clumsiness with figurative language, hasty reaches for biblical texts and imagery to apply to the unfolding of a chaotic situation, or conscious attempts to downplay race. Regardless of source and intent, several of the sermons deployed metaphors offering congregants theological rationalizations of the racial status quo that were similar to the rationalizations of racial injustice that evangelical leaders have offered their congregations for decades. Critical and ongoing conversations among scholars, congregants, and religious leaders about the productive and harmful forms of metaphor use identified in this dissertation would be a productive means of cultivating a form of evangelicalism marked by a greater concern for effectively working towards a racially just society. Rhetorical critics can make important contributions to studies of evangelical social issue rhetoric by continuing to investigate metaphors and elucidate their constitutive implications. That said, it is also important that religious leaders and congregants embrace the introspective critical work of deciding what kinds of metaphors will guide their congregations in responding to racial injustice. With the future of that conversation in mind, I offer some closing thoughts.

Closing Thoughts

In this study, I engaged in metaphoric cluster criticism from a constitutive perspective to investigate the metaphoric language that evangelical megachurch pastors in the Twin Cities deployed in the theological argumentation that they used to guide auditors in responding to the murder of George Floyd and the racial crisis that ensued. Three case studies investigated how pastors deployed metaphors based upon images, narratives, and spaces drawn from biblical texts

along with static and mobile metaphors. In the process, their sermons performed constitutive work that offered their congregations subjectivities to inhabit amid the crisis. Some of the metaphors deployed in these megachurch sermons invited auditors to inhabit subjectivities marked by culture war antagonism, an inward-looking focus on spirituality, and disengagement from social concerns, while others invited auditors to inhabit subjectivities characterized by commitments to antiracism, racial solidarity, and a blend of spiritual and material activism. If inhabited by auditors, these subjectivities have serious implications for the relationships between megachurches and the surrounding communities within a tumultuous racial context as well as implications for the relationships between the White majority of megachurch congregants and fellow congregants of other racial backgrounds.

I also proposed and subsequently demonstrated that the clusters of metaphors present in evangelical megachurch sermons mediate foundational evangelical theologies into divergent forms of guidance about how to respond to race issues. Examining how preachers deployed those metaphors ultimately yielded insight into the subjectivities offered to congregants from the pulpit. Furthermore, examining metaphoric clusters as they developed across multiple sermons in a series provided insight into the overall guidance received by auditors who attended services from week to week. That constitutive guidance was relatively consistent in the cases of Substance Church and Woodland Hills Church. At Bethlehem Baptist Church, however, the clashing guidance offered from week to week paralleled the deeply contentious disagreements about issues of racial justice and empathy for victims of oppression that arose among pastors, elders, and congregants in the months thereafter.

By continuing to grow while smaller churches close their doors, evangelical megachurches are quickly becoming the face of Christianity in America.[25] This means that

evangelical megachurch rhetoric is an increasingly important area of scholarly inquiry. The megachurch pastor's role as spiritual shepherd and biblical interpreter entails influence upon how thousands of congregants respond to the social issues of the day. That role also entails the challenge of navigating the "conceptual boundaries" of what congregants are willing to accept as aligning with the Bible's inerrant message.[26] Metaphoric clusters afford reform-minded preachers the opportunity to play the role of Ivie's trickster by using metaphors to invite shifts in how congregants interpret foundational theological commitments, but those who attempt to do so must navigate the tension between effectively challenging and sufficiently affirming their auditors 'established ways of thinking and acting.[27] This approach offers rhetors the affordance of utilizing concepts that carry compelling weight for religious auditors, but auditors 'religious commitments also entail conceptual boundaries whose violation is likely to result in the type of backlash that seems to have occurred at Bethlehem and Woodland Hills.[28] This is a particularly strong possibility within evangelicalism given the constraints entailed by the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, which lends potent authority to pastoral rhetoric when auditors perceive that it aligns with the message of scripture but invites equally potent rejection when auditors perceive a pastor's statements as a violation of that message. These tensions and constraints represent an even greater challenge for Black preachers whose embodied rhetoric may signify an outsider or oppositional positionality to auditors within evangelicalism, a predominantly White religious movement with a troubling racial history.[29] Metaphor offers pastors a tool for using theology to guide congregants to work towards a more racially just society. They may find that doing so is costly when addressing the sensitive issue of race, but those reputational risks also pale in

comparison to the suffering caused by racialized violence. This dissertation provides some specific starting points for leaders willing to take those risks.

This dissertation identifies specific types of metaphor use that have the potential to foster productive engagement across racial lines when deployed within evangelical theological argumentation. Rather than applying a typically individualistic evangelical view of morality to racial injustice, Meyer, Boyd, and Moore confronted auditors with questions about their complicity in systemic racism. Though using figurative language, these rhetors simultaneously eschewed the euphemistic language that some of their peers used to communicate problematic ideas about race. Instead, they used metaphors that named White supremacy as evil and explicated its consequences. These sermons voice the kind of socially-engaged call to reform found in the Social Gospel tradition. They are by no means the final word needed from evangelicalism on the topic of race. For all of their productive constitutive work, these sermons might also have done more to point congregants to specific opportunities for activism. That said, they offer a picture of what it looks like for evangelicals to begin challenging evangelicalism's "problem of whiteness" from the megachurch pulpit with constitutive guidance.[30] Mediations of theology into antiracist guidance and critiques of White supremacy as sin are excellent places to start, even as more rhetorical work remains to be done to mobilize evangelical congregants as agents of genuine racial healing. The need for that work has remained persistent in the years between Floyd's death and the time of this writing.

Four years after the tragic murder of George Floyd in the summer of 2020, intersections of theological, racial, and political rhetoric swirl through evangelical discourse during another contentious election year. In August of 2024, Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump attacked his Democratic opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris, by accusing her of "turning

Black" to co-opt a racial identity for political purposes.[31] Meanwhile, links between evangelical views of God's sovereignty over society and Republican politics also remain strong, as evident in recent examples from evangelical political rhetoric. These include statements attributing Trump's survival of a July 2024 assassination attempt to divine intervention and statements declaring that Trump has been chosen by God to defeat the "forces of darkness" by winning the 2024 election.[32] At the same time, groups of theologically conservative Christian leaders are producing rhetoric that interrogates the link between politics and religion that constitutes the religious right, invites congregants to move away from "Trumpism and White Christian nationalism," and seeks to change the "tone" of evangelical discourse to reflect the movement's growing racial diversity.[33] It remains to be seen whether these or any other nascent attempts at shifting evangelicalism's racial politics will prevail. Meanwhile, the brutality inflicted upon George Floyd must not be allowed to happen again, and evangelical race rhetoric plays a constitutive role in whether that type of brutality is tolerated as a sign of society's lack of spirituality or viewed as evidence of systemic racism that demands urgent intervention.

These closing examples are but a small sample of the discourse comprising the ongoing rhetorical negotiation of evangelicalism's relationship to race within American public life. Subjectivity-shaping rhetorics that reify or challenge that relationship merit a continual investment of attention from rhetorical scholars. More specifically, rhetorical critics must continue to look at the constitutive work underlying the veneer of colorblind language that so often coats evangelical race rhetoric. The metaphoric clusters present within theological discourse offer rhetorical critics insight into whether that rhetoric ultimately guides those who attend to it to become passive proponents of an inadequate social status quo or socially-engaged

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Chapter 5 Notes

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