PhD thesis

A theology of persecution and Christian endurance: Cain, Abel, and a 'Black Book of Acts' among the St. Thomas Moravians, 1732-1740

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A Theology of Persecution and Christian Endurance:

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ABSTRACT

This project contributes to the discipline of theological ethics. It examines the theology, priorities, and practices of the eighteenth-century St. Thomas Island Moravians, one of the first African-led, multicultural churches in the Americas. Enslaved African Christians have been overlooked among the historical narratives of those who endure faithfully under anti-Christian persecution, as scholarly focus on their ethnic suffering has often overshadowed the abuses committed against their faith. This research brings forth a fresh articulation of Christian endurance under hostility, with the community's Christian identity at the forefront rather than their ethnic identity.

This project built on a foundation of traditional covenantal theology, with nods to early narrative theology and Moravian missiology, to create an operational lens that explores the doctrine (epistemology) and habits (ethics) of the population in the context of a singular, covenantal story. This approach gives primacy to the nature of Christians as a 'storied' people, while simultaneously highlighting different historical aspects of the people of God. The covenantal tradition grounds the thesis in a coherent telling of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, while postliberal narrative and Moravian aspects bring forward the community's everyday expressions of the life of Jesus (ethics) and their response to persecution (Christan endurance).

By interpreting the community's historical records and context through an Augustinian-styled premise of Cain and Abel, this theological approach to ethnohistory introduces a story-based premise to help parse the ongoing historical persecution of Christians and their ability to endure. It regards the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper as key elements in the community's ability to endure marginalisation, discrimination, and violence for their Christian faith, and in doing innovates toward a Theology of Persecution and Christian Endurance Studies.

A Theology of Persecution and Christian Endurance:
Cain, Abel, and a 'Black Book of Acts' Among the St. Thomas Moravians, 1732-1740

by

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This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed _____ (Candidate)

Date _____ 31 October 2024

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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DEDICATION

For those who endure amidst challenging circumstances;

all Christian mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers of the past, present and future.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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1. CHAPTER 1: A THEOLOGY OF PERSECUTION & ENDURANCE

This research introduces a premise by which Christians may better understand the relationship between persecutors and those persecuted for their faith. It brings to light the endurance practices of the eighteenth-century African-led Moravian congregation on the small Caribbean Island called St. Thomas. Their community embodied the faithful persistence of Christian communities who survived hostility by returning to the apostolic faith and force of the New Testament church, often during scandal and corruption committed by the secular and religious institutions around them. The St. Thomas Moravians help historians and scholars gain a new understanding of overlooked African diaspora Christians, whose lived faith was significantly impacted by the early trans-Atlantic slave trade and the economic and social developments of the New World. They also reveal the habits and virtues that enable Christian communities to endure, and even flourish, under the hardship of anti-Christian persecution.

1.1 My Story Within the Covenantal Story

My journey to this research of eighteenth-century African and European Moravians represents the culmination of a thirty-year trek alongside persevering churches around the globe. The first time I visited the former Soviet Union, I found myself in Ukraine as she rediscovered her national identity and reclaimed her religious freedom. It was 1994, and I had only converted to Christianity six months before. In God's providence, I returned to that nation more than a few times in two years to interface with Protestant evangelicals, practitioners of traditional beliefs, and Orthodox Christians newly free from Soviet Russia. The Communist regime had, for generations, demanded worship of the gods of Communist ideology. It was there in Eastern Europe that I was exposed to the concepts of 'underground church,' 'anti-Christian hostility,' and 'religious persecution.' I began to listen to important twentieth-century voices like Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, Andrew van der Bijl, and countless unnamed pastors and laypeople who had lived the Book of Acts in their lifetime.

In the thirty years since, I've often asked why these voices, and stories resonate so strongly with my own. I am an African American Westerner living in the freer world, and

it didn't take much time to pinpoint the draw of the persecuted church. As a documented descendent of enslaved Africans trafficked during the trans-Atlantic trade, I saw in post-Soviet Ukraine a mirror reflection of the early days of the organic movement of Christians in the Black church that met secretly in America's hush harbours.[1] The stealth methods of worship, evangelism, radical conversion, transformation, secret communities, and culture shaping through the lives of the hard-pressed religious communities in the African diaspora were stunningly familiar. I began to see commonalities of suffering and thriving not just between Ukrainians and African Americans, but among all the underground communities I served.

Whether they were in China, Iran, Pakistan, North Korea, or Japan, a clear historical, sociological, and theological premise emerged to capture the commonalities of this 'set-apart' people. Though despised and pressured by their government and surrounding cultures, they are bound together, kept and multiplied through an identity that transcends history, geography, and linguistic and ethnic barriers. I have observed the State's hostility toward faithful Christians, the hostility of the religious establishment, and of those who resent Christians who insist on worshipping God according to how he defines himself in his written word. A biblical premise formed through the years through applying Scripture to historical and ethnographic lenses. These experiences brought me to a question: What is the nature of this invisible, historical line of the people of God who worship in Spirit and Truth, and who sacrifice all to live after the pattern of the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ?

A second motivating factor is that in advocating for persecuted global Christians, I have noticed a spiritual deadness from the American church in her connection to the global body of Christ. I liken this general indifference to a literal medical condition experienced by a small population in Sweden. For hundreds of years in Sweden's Vittangi village, there has existed a high incidence of a disorder called acute or congenital analgesia, where its sufferers feel no pain. This hereditary medical condition passes incurably from generation to generation and finds its patients able to function in everyday

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[1] 'Invisible' church meetings during slavery were usually held in 'hush harbours,' or secret locations: cabins, wooded areas, swamps, shores, and the like where the enslaved could worship and listen to preaching without being detected by the slave master. To attend church in a hush harbour was a denial of the slaves' religious freedom and a high-risk endeavour, often with severe punishment - and sometimes martyrdom - for having been caught. See Albert J. Raboteau's *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*, Albert J. Raboteau (Oxford University Press, 2004) and John W. Blassingame's *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (LSU Press, 1977).

life, yet unable to feel life's physical effects. Wounds bleed, bones break, yet not even the failure of their own internal organs is felt until irreversible damage has occurred. For the analgesia sufferer, all of life becomes a danger unless treatment restores the patient's ability to reconnect the neurological synapses between the body and the mind. Following this analogy, Christians in the freer world have a form of spiritual analgesia, where the pain of others in the Body doesn't penetrate our consciousness. As gross injustices are perpetrated against Christian communities in places like Chibok and Lahore, Aleppo, Cairo, Alexandria, Yemen, Raqqa, Mosul, Zhejiang, the Kingdom of Saud, Morocco, the prisons of Pyongyang and beyond, the modern Christian should 'feel' these mass assaults; if they do not, there is a connection missing.[2] F. Kefa Sempangi, who suffered under Idi Amin's tyranny and witnessed the martyrdom of many Ugandan saints, argued in his testimony *A Distant Grief* that Christians in the freer world aren't separated from the global body of Christ by geography, but rather by psychology and spiritual disconnection (Sempangi 2006). I too have observed that Christians in the freer world are unable to prioritise persecuted brothers and sisters. Research that reflects on Scripture, history, ethnography, and the power of the Holy Spirit can stimulate a global reconnection among Christian communities. Once our synapses are reconnected, we will discover important principles that God's people have applied under hostility throughout history and in the contemporary world.

This thesis shows the persistence of Christian endurance throughout history and posits that they are currently being rediscovered and applied in my current Western context. This environment is ripe for such a rediscovery, as it is a rapidly shifting social environment where Christians are losing the social perks they previously enjoyed, being unseated by a culture that no longer appreciates Christianity as a positive force. In this context, biblical Christians are feeling the birth pangs of open resentment and hostility toward New Testament Christianity from various religious and non-religious establishments. New study centres such as the Centre for House Church Theology, which translates the teachings of China's Early Rain house church network for the global church, and the Edmiston Centre for the Study of the Bible and Ethnicity, which I direct, are pioneering theological works and practice in Christian faithfulness under cultural hostility. Such organisations provide a deeper understanding of endurance and serve to

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[2] The concept of 'spiritual analgesia' first appeared at the Desiring God website. Ellis, K. A. 'You Also Are in a Body'. Desiring God (blog), 21 April 2016.

awaken the American church amidst a culture often driven by extreme ethnocentrism, nationalism, or cultural deconstruction. In my work among institutions that serve the persecuted church, I've witnessed a growing conversation among beleaguered Christian communities across geographic and linguistic lines; they are writing letters of encouragement from one region to another. It's been my honour to assist in translating and delivering these modern epistles as governments and cultures convulse around the globe. These conversations occur amid scandals in culturally and politically compromised institutions, and a growing atmosphere of global resentment toward a primary identity seated in obedience to Christ, and who hold to a high view of Scripture. While much has been written historically around the broader themes of 'theology of suffering,' this project and its suggested premise for understanding the origin and practice of persecution against Christians, offers a contribution to a fresh discipline that may be called a Theology of Persecution, or Christian Endurance Studies.

Locating the habits and priorities of faithful persevering communities will enable the contemporary Christian communities to anticipate conditions that lead to anti-Christian hostility, and to weather the storms faithfully and thoughtfully. All our stories, through history and in the contemporary world, among all the ethnicities who believe in the transformational Person of Jesus Christ, are bound up and rooted in the story of the kingdom of God; a people created, set apart, kept and perfected by a Covenant keeping God. This Gospel is the message for which men and women are incarcerated and risking their lives around the world, for which women, men and children are willing to die. It is the message on which we stand, and by which we are saved; that love was fully demonstrated through Christ, and while we were yet sinners, he died for us according to the Scriptures (Romans 5:8).

1.2   Defining Persecution: The Nature of Being 'Other'

Scripture defines persecution through experiences spoken and written by those who overcame, beginning with Jesus Christ himself. Throughout Scripture, persecution is shaped and defined by the life of Christ. It is shaped by the anticipation of Christ (Isaiah 53) and his incarnation, life, death, and ultimate glorification. As Christ spoke with his first followers, he shaped their future with past prophetic words: 'If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world,

therefore the world hates you …. A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name because they do not know him who sent me.' (John 15:18-24) This promise shaped the lives of his followers for generations to come. Every instance of New Testament fulfilment that followed makes it clear that persecution was not only to be expected, but that some form of anti-Christian hostility would be normative. There would always exist the risk martyrdom, a witness that leads to dying Christ's 'death so that others may live,' considered throughout church history as the 'ultimate sacrifice.'

Among the writings of the New Testament churches, the persecution experience ranged from mild hostility to intensely violent actions. These actions included ridicule, restriction, certain kinds of harassment, discrimination, torture, imprisonment, ostracism, or death. From the biblical perspective, persecution encompasses actions spanning the full range of hostility and can be violent, physical, psychological, or social (Matthew 6:11-12, Luke 6:22, 2 Corinthians 11:23-29, Galatians 6, James 1, etc.). Likewise, in the life of Christ and the lives of his followers, persecution came not only from communities outside of the household of faith and their governments but also from compromised religious institutions that falsely claimed the name of Christ (John 16:1-3).

The contemporary world also understands religious freedom as a fundamental human right. International bodies have drawn parameters to help support and advocate for Christians in repressive cultures. This has helped the modern world gain an understanding of the persecuted Christian life in places where such communities are at greatest risk. Those who experience the most extreme physical violence for their faith. The evidence of such dynamics: beatings, assaults, rape or sexual abuse, female genital mutilation, electric shocks, invasive physical examinations, medical experimentation, forced marriage, labour, abortion or sterilisation; torture and deliberate infliction of mental harm, prolonged unlawful detention, genocide, trafficking, substantial economic discrimination or harm: deliberate deprivation of food, housing, employment, or other life essentials, or ransacking, destruction, or confiscation of property, passport denial, pressure to become an informer, or restrictions on access to education, denial of access to Scripture, restricted movement and assembly, forced internment, or other discrimination or harassment, are markers that define persecution against Christians. These are modern markers to identify cultures that have marginalised Christians simply because they bear the name of Christ, and are therefore perceived as a threat to government, culture, or both.

In the eighteenth century, where the subjects of this thesis sit historically, Christian communities of African descent across the diaspora experienced ethnic and religious abuse during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Their experience would be familiar to those who encountered persecution in the early Church and today in the contemporary world. The African Moravian Christians at the heart of this study experienced a severe form of religious persecution from 1732 to 1740. They framed their Christian identity as primary over their ethnic identity, and historical records, letters, court documents, and personal testimonies show that religious rights abuses against them were not only frequent, but occurred through legislation, culture, and ecclesial compromises from their own denomination and surrounding churches.

Commonly in studies of the African diaspora during the eighteenth century, religious freedom abuses are overshadowed by scholarly focus on persecution against the subjects' ethnic identities. Therefore, enslaved African Christians have been overlooked among persecution narratives. This research flips that perspective due to the Moravians' biblical perception of themselves as a Christian family above other identities. By examining the ethics, values, and practices of one of the first African-led, multicultural churches in the Americas, their story and theology bring forth a fresh articulation of Christian perseverance and endurance with the community's Christian identity at the forefront of consciousness, rather than their ethnic identity.

At its foundation, this is a classically typological study dealing in biblical and historical repetitions (Hamilton 2022: 28). Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) explores the biblical story of Cain and Abel in *City of God*, Book XV, to illuminate the relationship between pagan Rome and the Christian community. His principles align closely with Reformed theology, particularly in affirming God's sovereignty, the doctrines of election, total depravity, and the concept of pilgrimage from the earthly to the eschatological kingdom. Augustine's critique of Rome's values establishes two cities: the 'City of God' (*Civitas Dei*), composed of true believers, and the 'City of Man' (*Civitas Terrena*), where nominal believers are driven by earthly priorities.

Following Augustine's premise, I argue that there is a historical persistence of two interrelated stories that shape how the modern persevering church may understand a Christian commitment under anti-Christian hostility. I have named this dynamic after Cain and Abel, after the filial relationship detailed in Genesis 4.

The Cain and Abel dynamic looks back at the worship of Abel as a type of the doxologically obedient life and death of Christ: undeserved hostility and hatred toward God cast onto those who identify with Christ, with the spirit of Cain railing against them. The study examines the two brothers as two types of humanity and as types of obedience versus rebellion, life versus death, building versus destruction, and wisdom versus folly. The lives of the two brothers create an environment where we can observe the same historical patterns playing out again and again over the course of redemptive history.

Modelling Augustine, I first locate this understanding in the Genesis narrative of God's covenantal promise to create and preserve a people for himself. This promise culminates in the ingathering around his throne in the Revelation narrative. Forces that are antagonistic toward the biblical narrative resist a covenantal understanding of Scripture; this antagonism marks the people of God as their own distinct cultural minority. Despite the cultural resistance, this minority is divinely and stubbornly persistent from age to age, from 'Creation' to 'Consummation,' from the physical to the eternal. I will argue that this dynamic is captured first in the biblical narrative between Cain (representing biblical rebellion against God), and Abel (representing doxological faithfulness that honours God). Rooted in the Greek word *'doxa,'* meaning 'glory,' I am using the phrase 'doxological' to mean an expression that acknowledges God's sovereignty, power and glory through acts of adoration, thanksgiving, faith or committed resolve.

In his interpretation, Augustine argues that Cain and Abel represent a spiritual dichotomy, with Cain symbolising self-love and earthly ambition, and Abel embodying humility and devotion to God. He writes, 'Cain, then, was the first child born to those two parents of the human race, and he belonged to the city of men. Abel was born later, and he belonged to the city of God' (Augustine, 2013: 139). This distinction provides Augustine with a premise for understanding human history through the ongoing moral conflict between these two archetypes.

Augustine further reflects on the motivations behind each brother's offering: "Do not be like Cain, who was from the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12). He notes that "the reason why God did not honour Cain's gift is that it was wrongly divided in the sense that, although he gave something of his own to God, he gave himself to himself" (Augustine, 2013: 146). This attitude, he contends, characterises the City of Man, where "the earthly city...worship[s] a god or gods with whose help it might reign in victory and earthly peace...from the lust to exercise dominion over others." By contrast, the faithful in the City of God live in humility, offering genuine worship and 'enjoy[ing] God,' foreshadowing the eternal kingdom to come (Augustine, 2013: 146).

For this thesis, Augustine's perspective aligns well with the Reformed principle of *sola fide*, or salvation by faith alone, understanding covenantal faithfulness as a response to God's grace rather than a salvific work. While Cain's hostility represents a path of 'self-love' and 'lust to exercise dominion,' Abel's doxological response signifies the genuine

faithfulness that believers are called to emulate. Augustine suggests that believers will continually battle between these orientations, as Paul writes, 'For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war... Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!' (Romans 7:21-25).

This perspective provides a theological foundation and tradition for examining the faithfulness of the Moravian Church under hostility on St. Thomas Island. Augustine's premise critiques both society and the Church, allowing for a deeper evaluation of when Christian communities align more closely with the City of Man than the City of God: 'whenever Christian communities violate the covenantal story to prefer and prioritise the City of Man, exemplifying vessels of wrath more than vessels of mercy' (Augustinus, 2013: 145).

The Cainian tendency toward hostility creates culturally accommodating and sometimes corrupt communities that ultimately work toward human destruction; the object of their wrath becomes the people of God, who are then abused within rebellious dominant institutions and structures. From inside these structures, smaller communities form who wish to return to simpler New Testament practices and kingdom ideals such as obedience and sacrifice. These smaller communities develop inside compromised religious institutions to provide a life-giving alternative witness to the religious institution and their surrounding societies; a community based on Christ's life, death, resurrection, and glorification. This project asserts that the African-led, multi-cultural community of St. Thomas Island, during their years of persecution, was such a community.

The community's extensive records have been a valuable resource for this project since their virtues, values, ethics, and priorities are strikingly like the New Testament reality and the ongoing biblical story of the people of God. They provide a theological and practical platform to address the broad persistence of such alternative communities under ecclesial, governmental, and cultural fire.

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[3] Matthew 24:35
[4] Hebrews 13:11
[5] John 1:1-5.

As mentioned previously, most ethnic identity-driven scholarship on the historical African Christian diaspora focuses on religion in service of race and racial awareness, not on Christian endurance under anti-Christian persecution. The detailed work of scholars on the topic, such as Raboteau, Gerbner, Tannenbaum, Minty, and others, has challenged and expanded scholarly understanding of Christianity and racial injustice, religion's role in the construct of race, the missiological impact of European expansion into the Atlantic, mostly through premises driven by racial and ethnic concerns. Departing from these premises, my dissertation sets the Moravian St. Thomas Community's Christian identity as primary, and their struggle with anti-Christian hostility, as central to their expression of faith after the pattern of the New Testament church.

Christian mission to this community of African Moravians was inspired and initiated by a self-emancipated African slave named Anthony Ulrich. Upon his emancipation, he fled the island and found employment in Germany. Ulrich became a Christian before his emancipation and was burdened to see his family set free from the physical and spiritually destructive forces of secular and profligate religious institutions that dominated the island. Upon hearing Ulrich's story, a mission effort was begun in 1732 by Moravian missionaries Johan Leonard Dober, Tobias Leopold, and David Nitschmann. That work was fanned into flame by the continuing efforts of Friedrich Martin, Rebekka (Shelley) Freundlich, Matthäus Freundlich, and an entire community of mission-minded, persecuted Afro-Caribbean and European Christians.

A multi-ethnic worshipping community in a slaving, segregated environment, is distinctive for its time. Such a unique community requires a unique approach to understanding their practices, culture, and theology. This multidisciplinary exploration of the eighteenth-century community introduces an approach to a theological-historical ethnography and engages theological ethics and covenantal and narrative approaches to theology. With this unique combination, this research offers fresh insight into the current understanding of church history, missiology, global anti-Christian persecution, and Christian endurance, and presents new dimensions in understanding the African diaspora's Christian experience.

The St. Thomas Moravians displayed the unique communal and personal virtues that their shepherd-theologian, Nicholas Zinzendorf, defined as the Philadelphian

Ideals.[6] These ideals, representative of the simplicity and sacrifice of the New Testament church, have been attractive and repellent to outsiders throughout church history. A survey of the narratives of these enslaved and free people of colour, their personal diaries and letters, court records, denominational councils, and missionary surveys reveal that the community was not merely *a-political* or *a-cultural*, nor could it be properly called a counterculture. On the contrary, their members exercised a minority view of politics and culture based on Christ and him crucified, rather than on the power of the state. Unlike their surrounding influences, they did not rely on the use of violence, coercion, or cultural subversion that others used to attempt and control a secular civil order. They were decidedly '*other*-cultural' and '*other*-political' in their faith and practice.

Throughout this thesis, I will call on Scripture, historians, and ethicists to unpack, examine, define the idea of an 'other-political' and 'other-cultural' reality. The idea finds its initial shape in the Covenantal promise that is stated in Genesis 1 and 2 in the creation account and the telos of mankind (to bring glory and honour to God and enjoy him forever), is prophesied in Isaiah 6, fulfilled in Revelation 7:9 and 21. In the redemptive-historical sweep of Scripture, these Scriptures speak to a culture and kingdom line that manifests throughout history. Toward the end of the last century, Stanley Hauerwas prophetically reminded contemporary Western Christians of the power and necessity of kingdom-oriented Christian communities: 'The church does not exist to provide an ethos for democracy or any other form of social organisation, but stands as a political alternative to every nation, witnessing to the kind of social life possible for those that have been formed by the story of Christ' (Hauerwas 1981: 12).

A close examination of the Philadelphian Ideals and Moravian missiology is important to investigate the St. Thomas Moravians' premise. Their communal life helps establish the community as a resistant kingdom force in contrast to their surrounding cultures; therefore, a deeper treatment of these ideals has been drawn from the recent scholarship of historian Dr Paul Peucker, Director of the Moravian Archives (the official repository for the records of the Moravian Church in America). Understanding the theology is essential to understanding the narrative as well as the community's place in redemptive history; it was these Philadelphian Ideals, grounded in a return to the

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[6] Later in this chapter, I expand on the development of the Philadelphian Ideals, their impact on the Moravian community at Herrnhut and the St. Thomas saints. I delve more deeply into their impact on the universal Church, the society around them, and the lasting relevance of the Cain and Abel dynamic that is argued throughout this thesis.

principles and priorities of New Testament life, that emboldened an emancipated African woman named Magdalena with no social standing to confront the sovereigns of Denmark, and humbly demand religious freedoms for the St. Thomas community. It was these principles that inspired the octoroon evangelist Rebekka Freundlich to repeatedly risk walking the well-worn island road known as The Path to take discipleship and mercy ministry to outlying plantations, passing severed body parts strewn about The Path as warning to other missional Moravians like her.

Living as an other-cultural and other-political community thrust these African and European Moravians headlong into illegal eldership, leadership, forbidden baptisms, and illicit bible literacy projects. The community ministered and worshipped under constant threat of imprisonment, dismemberment, or trade away from their families. Their recorded testimonies reveal how their Christian faith propelled this multicultural community to the margins of not only its secular culture, but also to the margins of their own denomination as they were tormented by institutions that named the name of Christ. Yet even as they were marginalised, the congregation was also supernaturally thrust into the centre of the culture as both its social problem, and its spiritual solution.

To understand the context into which this St. Thomas Moravian community was born, I first provide a historical and theological narrative of the community, identifying the major figures who shaped their *other-cultural* and *other-political* ethos. I then walk through the covenantal narrative of the Cain and Abel dynamic to provide a theological approach to the root hostility historically shown to faithful, obedient communities. I then provide a brief historical and theological sketch of recent scholarship on the events which led to the Church's expansion into the Americas, or the 'New World,' appealing to Augustine's similar approach in analysing his own Roman culture. I then focus on the community's endurance through persecution from both the surrounding secular culture and their existing religious institutions.

1.3   Cain, Abel, and the Philadelphian Ideals

Genesis 4 sets two storylines against each other that occur within the overarching narrative: the story of Christ and the people of God. These two sub-stories can be used to frame the quest for power and the press for perseverance throughout Christianity, based on worship obedience and worship rebellion. Throughout this thesis, I use this binary Augustinian premise set forth in *City of God,* distinguishing between the ethical legacies of the brothers Cain and Abel.

Old Testament scholar James Hamilton helps us understand the significant connections between Cain and Abel through Genesis 3 and 4. The two brothers, 'inform our understanding of the unfolding plot of Genesis, the Bible, and the world. The promise in Genesis 3:15 came in words of judgment to the serpent that there would be enmity between himself and the woman, enmity between her seed and his. The cursing of Cain in 4:11 identifies him with his figurative father, the devil (Gen 3:14, cf. John 8:44-47, 1 John 3:8-15) (Hamilton 2022: 14).

Hamilton elaborates that 'God's promise in Genesis creates a set of expectations and ideas: that those who rebel against Yahweh and his purposes will be identified with the serpent, that those who embrace Yahweh and his purposes will be identified with the woman and her seed, and that there will be ongoing conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Hamilton 2022: 14).

I affirm Augustine's binary premise and have found it useful to this project. What is in view in the story of Cain in Abel is an origin story of two competing ethical orientations: the propagation of destruction through personal, political, and spiritual power through abuse, versus propagation through personal, political, and spiritual power unto life that comes through high-cost obedience. The two opposing heart orientations are clear: Abel's posture in approaching Yahweh was judged as acceptable, and Cain's was judged as unacceptable. In modern forms, Cainian communities sometimes turn on and oppose other Cainian communities. Such tribes, as they gain power through cultural accommodation and an increased focus on temporal utopias, sometimes grow to perpetuate injustice against broad humanity. They specifically persecute those who strive to hold to, and live by, the ideals of the covenantal story.

The orientation of Cain elevates the self as an idol that flattens and truncates the genuine Gospel to a singular goal; it can be monomaniacal. It is unmoved by the love of Christ toward its enemies, and the forgiveness Christ holds for them. Meanwhile loving enemies, forgiving, and praying for those who persecute is the ethic of Abel as he preconfigures Christ. The legacy of Cain empties the transformative Gospel of Christ of its robust spiritual fullness and its holistic, kingdom-building character … abusing his brother Abel's legacy in the process. The orientation of Cain manifests Christian tribes based on temporal ideals. Abel is, as he was outside of the garden fence, an inconvenient person in the world of rebellious Cain. Abel is Cain's flesh-thorn in every generation, useless to the temporal movements and worthy of scorn, disregard, and death. The operating differential of Cainian communities is hostility. If Abel displays the

identity and sacrificial ethics of the people of God, he must be marginalised, silenced, or snuffed out. The goal is to erase both indictment and the shame; Cain must erase what he ultimately cannot control, and the life and doxological obedience of Abel cannot be controlled because they exist on an untouchable, transcendent and eternal plane. Cain's attempts at erasure are damaging in the temporal realm, but they are eternally futile: one cannot erase that which will live forever in Christ.

The story that umbrellas the brothers' sub-narratives lays out the unique covenantal promise of Scripture in eleven words: *'I will be your God, and you will be my people.'* This divine promise, or covenant from Yahweh, encapsulates the story and defines the people of God; that the Creator of the universe has fashioned and breathed life into a people whose sole purpose is to worship him alone without compromise, redeem them from physical and spiritual death, and that his Creation ownership over all demands certain behaviour on the part of those who are members of his historical covenant community. With its divine character, Yahweh's 'covenant' is the foundation, the driving force, and the sustaining promise that defines the relationship between God and his people. It reaches even further in its ability to define God's people as a set-apart community among all other cultures on Earth:

> A 'covenant' is an agreement enacted between two parties in which one or both make promises under oath to perform or refrain from certain actions stipulated in advance. As indicated by the designation of the two sections of the Christian Bible—Old Testament (covenant) and New Testament— "covenant" in the Bible is the major metaphor used to describe the relation between God and Israel (the people of God). As such, covenant is the instrument constituting the rule (or kingdom) of God, and therefore it is a valuable lens through which one can recognize and appreciate the biblical ideal of religious community. (Herian and Mendehall, 1992: 1179).

These members will receive blessings for their loyalty and obedience to their Creator above any idols that could be worshipped (including self) and will receive curses for their disobedience. Reformed theologian John Frame points out that the Creator has mercifully expressed his unique covenant stipulations after the pattern of a treaty between a suzerain and a vassal, thus encouraging the idea that his people are to be a set apart people who follow this other-political, other-cultural ethical orientation that defines them and sets them apart from cultures, tribes and nations that surround them. In this premise, the great king (the suzerain) imposes a treaty (Yahweh's unique covenant), upon a lesser king (in this case, humankind who has been granted dominion over Creation yet is still under Yahweh's rule). In the covenantal view, this Greater King authored a document setting forth the covenant terms. So that all cultures might fully understand his terms, Yahweh puts this document into a standard and culturally familiar literary form:

> The document, typically, followed a standard literary form:

1. The name of the suzerain.
2. Historical prologue: what the suzerain has done to benefit the vassal.

3. Stipulations: commands specifying how the vassal king and his people must behave
    a. In general, the requirement of exclusive allegiance to the suzerain (sometimes called love).
    b. Specifically, laws indicating how the suzerain wants the vassal to behave.
4. Sanctions:
    a. Blessings: rewards for obeying the stipulations.
    b. Curses: punishments for disobedience
5. Administration: dynastic succession, use of the treaty document, etc. (Frame 2008: 20-21)

The stipulations that require 'exclusive allegiance' to the sovereign treaty between Yahweh and his people are captured in the divine covenantal statement, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people.' This statement marks these set-apart people as a unique community, intended as an 'other-political, other-cultural' representation of the life of Jesus Christ. These eleven words are restated at every covenantal turn in the lives of the people of God, a promissory note fulfilled through Christ's life, death, resurrection and glorification. The promise assures that these people will span history in their lives, harmonise ethnicities and languages in their makeup, cross geographic boundaries, and even transcend space and time in the community's final ingathering around the throne of God. They represent a kingdom movement that is divinely sustained until its purpose is fulfilled:

> 'Covenant' … is the Bible's term for "a chosen [as opposed to natural] relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other," often with God as the witness). Thus, a covenant's core is a nonbiological, oath-bound relationship like those in clan alliances (Gen. 14:13), personal agreements (31:44), international treaties (Josh. 9:6; 1 Kings 15:19), national agreements (Jer. 34:8-10), and loyalty agreements (1 Sam. 20:14-17), including marriage (Mal. 2:14). (Beale, Carson, Glade, and Naselli 2023: 144)

This thesis draws on Frame, and on the work of Meredith Kline: two covenantal theologians prominent in the mid- and late- twentieth century. It incorporates other theological approaches that are at odds with a covenantal approach but have helpful elements within them for examining the St. Thomas Moravians on several sub-levels of thought. Their differences and possible agreements relevant to this work should be noted.

Meredith Kline's approach to forensic justification in covenantal theology differs notably from Frame's. Kline's approach creates a stark division between the covenant of works, which is based on strict legal obedience, and the covenant of grace, which responds to humanity's need for redemption. Kline frames the covenant of works as a transactional arrangement, where God's relationship with humanity hinges on Adam's perfect adherence to divine commands, with corresponding blessings and curses. However, this emphasis on judicial and merit-based dynamics presents challenges for an argument focused on God's sovereign, personal, and relational character, as it minimises the continuity of God's gracious, relational engagement across covenants.

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In contrast, John Frame presents covenantal theology as a narrative of grace, beginning with creation and culminating in Christ's redemptive work. Frame argues that grace undergirds every covenant, seeing the covenant of works as itself a gift from God, who initiates a relationship with His creation. For Frame, the recurring promise, "I will be your God, and you will be My people," reveals God's commitment to a relational bond that transcends human failure. This framework portrays God not only as a righteous judge who invites the rebellious and oppressive to repentance, but also as a covenant partner and redeemer, aligning His justice and love within a coherent relational arc that ultimately fulfils itself in Christ.

My own understanding of covenantal theology affirms the narrative of the people of God as a story that begins and ends with grace. Kline's position is that through the "covenant of works" with Adam, humanity's obedience was required, yet I agree with Frame that even here, grace is no afterthought. The offer of relationship, even one with conditions, was an act of divine generosity, a gift from a sovereign Creator to His image-bearers. Every covenant God made was initiated by His love and mercy, a pattern of unearned favour that finds its climax in Christ. Here, God's grace isn't just an accent; it's the whole story. Jesus fulfils the demands of God's law in ways humanity never could, welcoming us into a covenant not built on our strength but on mercy. This, Frame affirms, is the heart of Reformed covenant theology, a covenant history where grace not only has the first word but also the last. I therefore found Frame's perspective most compelling for this project, as it underscores a continuity that integrates divine justice and grace to enrich our understanding of God's character and its ethical implications.

Moving beyond the project's theological foundation, I now address how three seemingly disparate theological approaches, Reformed theology, postliberal narrative theology, and Moravian Philadelphian Ideals were deployed to examine the habits and practices of St. Thomas Moravians under hostility. It is not my intent to harmonize these approaches. Throughout this thesis, a Reformed, covenantal approach grounds and leads. It should be seen as both a foundation for this project, and as an overarching meta-narrative that is inseparable from the lives and ethics of the people of God.

Although postliberal narrative theology disagrees with an overarching narrative, its emphasis on individual story, communal ethics, and identity is helpful and used to examine the habits and practices that sustained the St. Thomas Moravian community under anti-Christian hostility. Regarding the Moravian's theological approach on the island, a generous understanding of the covenant of grace helps account for their shift from their first missionary wave's strict pietism to the innovative and doctrinally inclusive approach of the Philadelphian ideals of the second wave led by Friedrich Martin. A generous accounting of God's relational character and mission likewise honours the community's consistent commitment to all men's dignity and the nations' ingathering through Christ.

My approach to the covenantal framework, drawn from Frame's, finds resonance with postliberal narrative theology's emphasis on relationality, though the two approaches differ in their theological methods. While covenantal theology tends to be systematic, seeing Scripture as a unified, metanarrative revelation of God's promises, postliberal narrative theology emphasises the diversity of voices within Scripture, celebrating its relational and communal aspects over strict doctrinal cohesion. Narrative theology resists a single metanarrative, instead inviting believers into a participatory, story-driven faith. Frame's approach, seeing covenantal history as a story of relational engagement, bridges aspects of all three perspectives, offering a relational foundation for theological ethics that is both biblically grounded and resonant with narrative theology's dynamic, contextual approach.

In chapter five, I introduce additional twenty-first-century theologians whose approaches to the covenantal narrative make their work sensitive to aspects of the postliberal narrative approach. Kevin Vanhoozer emphasises the relational and narrative aspects of covenant, seeing it as part of the "theo-drama" where God engages humanity within His unfolding redemptive story (Vanhoozer 2005: 44-46). Vanhoozer understands the covenant of grace as God's redemptive response, restoring humanity through Christ's obedience (Vanhoozer, 2005: 123-125).

Craig Bartholomew, influenced by sacramental theology, frames the covenants within a broader theo-dramatic framework, viewing creation as a vessel for God's grace and the covenants as relational and sacramental (Bartholomew 2008: 29-31). He views the covenant of grace as a progression in the divine narrative, culminating in Christ and embodied in the sacramental life of the church (Bartholomew 2008: 52-54). Vanhoozer, Frame, and Bartholomew each bring unique perspectives to the covenants, yet share fundamental affirmations in viewing them as integral to the story of redemption. Vanhoozer and Bartholomew's less structured approaches make them more pliable for applying postliberal narrative theology to the covenantal 'people of God.'

Throughout history, this kingdom movement called the 'people of God' has not only existed amidst persecution and hostile pressures from surrounding unbelieving communities, but also amidst persecution and oppression from religious institutions that named Christ and claimed to follow Yahweh, yet whose ethics were more grounded in institutional preservation, idolatry, and corruption than in Yahweh's ancient, covenantal story. There is a consistent and persistent outgrowth of historical oppositional tension between these narrative personalities - covenant keepers and covenant breakers, captured by the two brothers Cain and Abel. The first force to consider is the persistent decline of once vibrant, life-giving, kingdom-advancing Christian movements that fall into cultural accommodation, institutional ossification, and ethical compromise, so named the cult of Cain. The second force is the persistence of smaller Abel-like communities that constantly rise from within corrupt religious institutions, made up of those who want to renew or return to simple New Testament practices and principles. These latter, restoration-oriented communities take the brunt of persecution from larger institutionalised Christianity and their own surrounding secular cultures. Communities of Abel pay the price for embodying the covenantal story of the people of God in their habits, beliefs, and ethics even today, as they model congruities with the New Testament reality and modern persecuted communities worldwide.

The African and European Moravians on St. Thomas Island created just such a community, thus earning the descriptive name 'a Black Book of Acts' (Sensbach: 2005: 237). Sensbach presumes that the community's New Testament connection is clear to the reader without a detailed explanation. A more thorough study of the narrative, theology, praxis, priorities and communal habits of the St. Thomas Moravians in this thesis will show that his initial interpretation is not only correct but that the covenantal narrative provides a premise for understanding why the pattern of oppression and endurance repeats through history as successive, non-canonical chapters in the Bible's story.

Having clarified theological priorities and the usefulness of each, a general outline of the thesis now follows.

1.4   Chapter Overview

Chapter one introduces the question: Can the biblical Cain and Abel narrative be used as an effective theological premise to understand idol worshippers' hostility toward the faithful believers they persecute? The answer, drawn from Augustine's binary premise, has revealed specific practices, ethics, virtues, and values that communities of Abel prioritise to endure under anti-Christian hostility from (1) compromised Christian institutions that surround them and (2) their surrounding secular cultures. This first section begins with an introduction to the Cain and Abel dynamic, explores the consequences of each brother's priorities, and the impact of those priorities on their relationship with God and each other. This lays the groundwork to introduce the main players among the eighteenth-century St. Thomas Moravians, tracking their geographic journeys and the outworking of the Cain and Abel dynamic in each environment.

Chapter two continues their story once on the island and introduces the theology that sets them apart once assembled in one community. Similarities are explored in light of the early church's experiences detailed in the Book of Acts, as are the various Cainian cultures and religious institutions that persecuted them on the tiny Caribbean island.

Chapter three expands more fully on the covenantal and narrative theological principles that undergird the Cain and Abel dynamic and explores how the two impulses grew first into communities and then into worldviews that repeat throughout Scripture, carrying with them Cain's perpetual hostility toward Abel.

In chapter four, I detail the expansion of Cain's legacy into the New World and unfold how those cults shaped the eventual culture on St. Thomas Island.

The fifth chapter details the development of my qualitative theological-ethnohistorical approach to the project's primary source materials. There, I examine the places where I encountered the Cain and Abel dynamic in the historical development of C.G.A. Oldendorp's records, and how my process navigated those obstacles. Chapter five

also provides historical details and reflections on the impact of the 'other-cultural' kingdom theology practised by the St. Thomas Moravians, which they called the Philadelphian Ideals.

In the sixth chapter of the thesis, arguments are made for the role of the sacraments in Christian endurance among the Moravians and other persecuted minorities, and the essential role the sacraments play in identity, kingdom ethics, and adherence to the ancient story.

The seventh and final chapter summarises reflections on where the Cain and Abel premise might be applied in contemporary contexts to offer persecuted Christian communities a way to understand themselves, their endurance, their priorities, and their primary mission in enduring anti-Christian hostility.

1.5   The Story of the St. Thomas Moravians

I've chosen this eighteenth-century African and European Moravian community to develop a premise for understanding their unique qualities. My premise examines Christian endurance under persecution throughout the historic and unified Body of Christ. I also have a secondary interest in honouring my own ethnic heritage as a descendant of the African Christian diaspora, bringing forward the narrative of an African-led congregation in the Americas as a case of Christian endurance and resistance against persecution that echoes New Testament Christianity.

Stories of African diaspora Christians during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade are often missing from accounts of persecuted and persevering saints. Because of the strong focus on racial power dynamics among scholars when examining historical religious communities, when it comes to studying the African diaspora, ethnohistorians and theologians focus more on racial and ethnic oppression than on religious oppression of communities of colour. This research shifts the lens to focus on these communities' identity in Christ as the foundation for communal understanding and self-awareness. Prominent figures of the Moravian community who will be featured in this narrative are Magdalena (Dama of Great Popa), first-wave missionaries Johann Dober, Leopold Nitschmann and Tobias Leopold, second-wave missionaries Pastor Friedrich Martin, the interracially married missionary Matthias Freundlich, and his evangelist wife Rebekka

Freundlich, and the patron and Bishop of the community Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf and his German contemporary, theologian August Spangenberg.

Four hundred years of human trafficking across the Atlantic and into the New World created some of the largest demographic shifts the world had experienced to that date. Providentially, the dehumanising human trade caused the paths of certain individuals to create the St. Thomas Moravian community, a remarkable communal model of Christian faithfulness that cut against the grain of their surrounding man-centred cultures. The community drew hostility, ire, and eventually, admiration.

By the eighteenth century, which marks roughly the halfway point on the slave trade's four-hundred-year timeline, the impact of the fusion and diffusion of cultures, languages, and ethnicities were visible and the St. Thomas community palpably embodied the cultural effects of the trade's legacy. Cultures are not static as they are popularly presented; the displacement of people groups during this period, voluntary and forced, could not help but change languages, ethnicities, and customs, creating new versions out of old categories. This shaping and cultural exchange was inevitable, even as many fought to preserve what their tribes had known and practised for generations. The movements caused by human trafficking, voluntary cross-migration for traffickers and planters, missionary efforts, resettlement efforts for the emancipated back on Africa's shores, and the gains anticipated by New World explorers combined to alter entire people groups forever.

The trade's reshaping of the cultural dynamics of West Africa's Gold Coast, the Americas, and Europe is not insignificant. On St. Thomas Island, the clash of the religious and irreligious from all cultures, mixed with self-interested geopolitical strategies, deeply impacted any culture it touched, making the context of the island in the eighteenth century one of converging global and spiritual dynamics. The island's geography as an isolated land mass in the lesser Antilles only thirteen miles long and three miles wide, pressed its Christians into a self-contained microcosm much like the world of the New Testament. These dynamics taken together: the slave trade, expansion into the New World, legitimate and illegitimate mission efforts, and geopolitical machinations, created a society of many cultures from around the globe. St. Thomas became a social petri dish, where man's lowest impulses met with the pursuit of God's highest good. To understand the St. Thomas Moravian community, which encompassed the enslaved, the free, foreign missionaries and sympathetic friends, requires travelling to distinct areas of the world:

the Gold Coast of Africa; Herrnhut, Germany; Copenhagen, Denmark; and the Danish West Indies. Each area informed and influenced the major players on the tiny, colonised island.

The central figures of the narrative follow in order of their appearance. Magdalena of Popo, a noblewoman trafficked from Benin to St. Thomas who, once emancipated and 'awakened' to life and mission in Christ through the Moravians, became a leader in the community and pivotal in their eventual release from religious persecution; German Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, the wealthy ruler who oversaw the revival of the fellowship set in motion by the Bavarian movement of 1457 and bishop of the St. Thomas community; the emancipated African traveller Anton Ulrich who was the catalyst for the mission movement to St. Thomas; an excursion into the violent culture of St. Thomas and the contributing factors that made it so, and the impact of that cultural turbulence on the first wave of missionaries David Nitschmann, Tobias Leopold and Johann Dober. The narrative continues with self-emancipated, mixed-race Rebekka Freundlich joining Moravian pastor Friedrich Martin, and her eventual marriage to German missionary Matthäus Freundlich. The narrative expounds on this multicultural leadership's oversight of the growth of the island's congregation to nearly eight hundred during their most intense years of persecution, until its final and climactic resolution resulting in an easement of their religious suppression (Oldendorp 1987: 347).

In traditional narratives of the St. Thomas community, historians often begin with Moravian leaders such as Count von Zinzendorf or August Spangenberg or the Moravian missionaries; Leopold Nitschmann and Johann Dober. However, to honour the overlooked voices of the community, this research begins with the birth of one of the community's oldest and most influential members, one that Scripture would identify as 'the least of these;'[7] Magdalena, a high-born woman on Africa's Slave Coast, brought low by the trade. The Moravian diarists argue for the credibility of Magdalena's awakening through detailed notes on her belief systems before and after her conversion. They also argue from her willingness to join a beleaguered community that suffered for their belief and lifestyle, when there were other communal options available to her on St. Thomas, particularly among the emancipated, among kind-hearted island families, and among the marginalised free people of colour. Understanding the eldest and yet often least noted

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[7] Matthew 25:31-46.

member of the St. Thomas community brings clarity to the other-cultural, other-political ethos that sliced against other cultural grains of the contemporary, identity-based and often idolatrous and destructive ideologies that spanned the New World Therefore, this narrative begins with the 'least of these,' a woman who became one of the community's revered leaders: Magdalena, or Dama of the Great Popo.

1.6   Magdalena's Story: Africa's Slave Coast in 1650

Ebony-faced Magdalena was welcomed into the world by her parents in the late 1650s. Upon her arrival into the Popa Kingdom, they named her Dama. Her birthplace at the Bight (or Bay) of Benin placed her and her family at 'the trading and political centre of the Popo Kingdom, located in the western section of the Bight of Benin, a densely populated commercial and urban landscape' (Mancke and Shammas 2015: 115-117). Strategically located for commerce, the Bight of Benin had both the blessing and misfortune of being situated on the coastal edge of the Atlantic Ocean. Its coast stretched four hundred miles from its northernmost point to the Nun outlet of the Niger River. Today, one would recognise the narrow geographic strip of Benin by her modern neighbours Nigeria, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Niger. Even today, modern Benin's coastal landscape still stuns. Its dramatic sunsets mark time's passage, weaving together many cultural narratives with historical significance.

From Benin's reputation as a slaving centre on the African coast to establishing the seat of the powerful Dahomey Kingdom and its army of fearsome Agojie, warriors - the six-thousand-strong female army who battled to protect a powerful government run by a dynasty of kings (obas) - the coast has been a site of important world history. Their obas ruled over the region with an iron fist for four hundred years, overlapping significantly with the timeline of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Benin's spiritual secrets have abounded since its establishment in the tenth century. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, various traditional African religions existed that worshipped animals and natural phenomena. Early converts to Catholicism received tutelage of Catholic doctrine at the encouragement of Spanish Jesuit missionaries. The ancestor worship of the Dahomey elites mixed with the occult and gave the region its long-lasting global status as the 'birthplace of voodoo.' The syncretism that resulted from warring factions, slavery, and intermarriage, led to a co-mingling of cultures and traditions from Europe and surrounding African nations, and the region remained in a state of complex cultural flux for centuries. The positive trading of goods likewise

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shaped it, but also destructive human trafficking; various governments and kingdoms that rose and fell across the centuries maintained powerful control over the profitable Saharan trade routes.

The slave trade quite literally shaped the landscape of Benin's coast, and the majestic and strategic stilt houses built to escape capture still rise into the sky from Lake Nakoué lagoon today. These houses of refuge were ingeniously constructed in the eighteenth century by the Tofinu people to protect them from slave traders who feared the demon of the local waters they believed inhabited Lake Nakoué. Today, the site is protected by UNESCO as an architectural marvel and an important historical site. Commonly referred to today as 'the Venice of Africa,' one can imagine cautious yet proud eighteenth-century women and men navigating their small boats across the lake to and from the city's bustling centre.

Throughout this urban centre, fishers met farmers, and artisans skilled in iron and bronze created a bustling artistic landscape, all under the patronage of their monarchy. Deals were made between legitimate tradesmen, exchanging goods and services, ivory, and fabric. Iron, brass, copper, and bronze were traded for smelting, and an indigenous weapons trade contrasted with intricate, hand-woven baskets that crowned female heads that carried the day's marketing back and forth from inland to coast. Dotting the landscape was the ominous yet steady progression of Black bodies exported from the coast, rarely to return. As the sun rose and fell in the orange sky, the general populace went on with the vicissitudes of everyday life, and the tension of kidnapping or potential wartime upheaval intermingled with periods of national peace.

Dama slid from her mother's womb into this complex and constantly morphing society. The time of her birth is approximated to be in the late 1650s. She was high-born to a wealthy and well-respected Catholic family. Due to the early activities of Catholics in the western bight, coastal towns in Lower and Upper Guinea had several small Catholic congregations to which Dama's father belonged. Because of this, Magdalena had some exposure to Catholicism as a child. Historian Ray A. Kea notes that her father was Roman Catholic and taught her basic Catholic doctrine, the reading and writing of her own language *Aja-Ayizo* and some Portuguese.

Dama's Catholic education and her bilingual abilities set her apart as a member of the elite class in her homeland, and these factors also distinguished her as quite different in worship from other Dahomey elite classes. The Kingdom's monarchy and government elites practised a combination of ancestor veneration and vodun (voodoo),

and subjects sometimes syncretised Catholicism and vodun. The intersection of ancestor veneration of the Dahomey with the *vodun* (voodoo) religion of the Fon people was cemented in an annual ritual of the slaughter of thousands upon the death of a ruler or his posthumous deification. War captives were used as disposable human fodder for human sacrifice rituals; those who were not sold to foreign traders or retained for slave labour on royal plantations and farms escaped being used as sacrifices in these rites. The numbers massacred in just one ceremony varies among historians from four hundred, to upwards of five thousand murdered annually (Nunoo, 2019, Solly, 2022, Rummel, 2002: 63).

Their brutality, highly refined military strategy, high-level battle skills, massive army, and economic acumen in weapons dealing and human trafficking made the Dahomey kingdom into a powerful and long-reigning state. The nation was unique on the African continent, with an absolute monarchy that was centralised in the northern region of Abomie that expanded by force under successive kings into the provinces of Alladah, Ouidah, and beyond.

Sometime in the 1690s, when Dama was well into her middle age years, an intense time of civil war broke out; she found herself captive as war spoil. It was customary among the largest slave trading groups usually the Fon and the Dahomey kingdom, to sell their prisoners of war into the trade. To imagine the various scenarios that would find her trafficked, it's possible that she was captured and sold by early versions of the female Dahomey warrior women, the notable female fighters who built wealth for a successive line of male kings. Their warring, together with the male army, fed their countrymen and neighbours into a system that was, by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, increasingly hungry for servile Black bodies.[8] Dama likely experienced her first bitter taste of captivity in a holding cage, then through the forced two-mile march in chains to the coast of Ouidah, along with the estimated ten thousand other Africans who were sold from their homeland every year. It is certain that she travelled chained to hundreds of others aboard a slaving vessel; such was the beginning point of the Middle Passage.[9] She

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[8] There were twelve successive Dahomey kings (known as Obas) who ruled the kingdom from 1600-1904.The fierce and feared Dahomey women warriors first emerged in various forms under the ruler Wegbaja (1645-85) and continued under his successors.

[9] The Middle Passage was the forced voyage of the enslaved from trading posts that dotted the shores of the coast of West Africa to the New World. Up to six hundred enslaved were packed onto vessels, either 'loose packed' (on the back and shackled together) or 'tight packed' (on the side, head to foot and shackled together), while stacked on successive levels of wooden planks. The unfortunate were fed meagre rations and were expected to eat, urinate, defecate, and vomit where they lay. Their waste and misery rolled down the vessel's successive layers causing emotional distress, melancholy, and disease. The enslaved were

sailed on her back or side in toxic and abusive conditions, packed with her body indignantly pressed against 600 others.

To be trafficked was to be shackled for months to the living, the diseased, and the dead. It was typical of the Middle Passage voyage to lay in one's own waste for up to three months and, in Dama's case, sail more than five thousand miles to the Danish West Indies in such miserable conditions. Finally, it is also more than certain that she was purchased ultimately on St. Thomas, where she and thousands of others experienced the difficult acclimation to a new climate, unfamiliar flora and fauna, and rapid and painful assimilation into the lowest possible social and economic class. Moreover, she was confronted with learning a host of converging and conflicting cultures and languages, all at the threat of harsh physical punishment for misunderstanding the island's rules.

After many years of enslavement on St. Thomas, she was manumitted due to advancing age by Mr. Carstens, on whose plantation she worked.[10] Carstens, who will be discussed later in this chapter, was one of the wealthiest planters on St. Thomas. Despite being a highly visible member of the island's resistant and suspicious plantocracy, he and his wife were sympathetic stealth patrons of the Moravian movement. Since he was a member of the West India Company that propagated the slave trade, he often served as the mission's 'inside man' among those hostile toward the Christian conversion of the enslaved. That he was Magdalena's owner exposed her not only to the newly established Moravian community in a compassionate and intimate fashion, but he also allowed her time to study and learn from the Bible. This practice was frowned upon and often punished by the ruling plantocracy.

Even before Magdalena's conversion from Catholicism to Protestant belief, the Moravian theologian August Gottlieb Spangenberg remarked on Magdalena's wisdom and upstanding character. Spangenberg supported the St. Thomas work from its earliest days and was a frequent visitor to the beleaguered Christians. He wrote of a nobility in her character that helped the Moravian Brethren believe she was ripe to hear a Protestant presentation of the Gospel of Christ:

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brought topside periodically for further degradation, deflowering of virgins, and 'exercise' (forced dancing), while seamen swabbed the holds. Epidemics of disease, suicides, violence, sexual abuse, attempted insurrections, and piracy were common on the open seas. The entire journey could take up to three months.

[10] Mr. Carstens and his wife often appear in C.G.A. Oldendorp's records as lending finances or housing to the mission, manumitting the enslaved on his property and rehiring them as employees. He was very much in favour of the conversion of the Africans and sought to thwart the efforts of several 'evil-minded persons' who attempted to suppress the work of the mission (Oldendorp 1987: 315).

She is a woman similar to Cornelius in the *Acts of the Apostles (Acts 10).* She fears God and acts righteously. Before she eats anything at all in the morning, she falls on her knees, lowers her face to the earth, and prays. Before she goes to sleep, she does the same thing, manifesting a great and extraordinary respect before God. She said that she had learned these practices from her parents and that others in her land served the Lord in a similar manner. She stated however, that the people in Guinea who live along the coast knew nothing of these things. She could not understand why the Whites showed such little respect before God and seemed only to be paying him compliments. She said that until someone showed her a better way, she would persist in her practices in order that God might not become angry with her. We advised her to continue with these practices, to pray even more ardently -- indeed to pray all the time -- and not to become lax in these matters … We asked her if she would like to hear something about Christ the Son of God, who had come into the world for our good. 'Oh yes,' she said… (Oldendorp 1987: 313).

Magdalena could discern between the first and second tables of the law and their use and misuse among communities and cultures in her homeland, and on the island. Unknowingly, she observed the same vital relationship between epistemology and ethics that theologians such as Josephus, Augustine, Origen, Luther, Calvin, and others had written centuries prior (Calvin II, viii, 11-12, 1960: 376). Though there was disagreement among them on which commandments in the Decalogue belonged to which table, most agreed historically that there was (1) a duty to God-duty to fellow man distinction that connected the Object of the Christian's worship, (2) that how one believes flows into the outworking of his worship in the natural world and (3) that the two tables taken together set the limits to which the civil authorities are responsible for upholding the laws that govern civil society.

Magdalena wisely discerned that there were first and second-table distinctions between the tribal religions she learned in childhood and the Christ of the Moravians, as well as theological distinctions between Catholicism and Protestantism. In the previous quote, Spangenberg notes that she discerned ethical differences in the island's professing Christians' stated beliefs, the laws and customs of their societies that permitted deep cruelties and injustices, and their lives of dissipation which will be discussed at length later in chapter one. Moreover, their inhumane treatment of the enslaved, the free people of colour, and even their European neighbours around them revealed to her an incongruity between their doctrine and their ethics, as they had 'such little respect before God and seemed only to be paying him compliments' (Oldendorp 1987: 313).

Contrary to the Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone, however, Magdalena believed that literacy in Dutch Creole was required to follow the Christ of the Bible, and join the Moravian community. She told the brothers she felt she was too old to accomplish this task. Though she indicated she wanted to hear about the Christ they served, the Brethren also noted that she was dejected by the syncretised, cultural Christianity that held the island's Africans in a grip of works

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righteousness and European supremacy: 'I have been told that I had first to learn to speak good Dutch and then also learn to read it. Once that had happened, I could learn to pray. But I am too old for all that' (Oldendorp 1987: 313). The brothers alleviated the spiritual burden placed on her by man-centred, extra-biblical requirements to Christ. They bid her come to him with the assurance that 'God understands all languages, that He knew the yearnings of her heart and would listen to everything. In that regard, she had only to ask him, that she might have even more light and understanding' of His life, death, and resurrection on her behalf' (Oldendorp 1987: 313). She soon revealed a marked shift in her understanding of 'salvation by grace alone through faith alone,' the assurance of salvation through his death, and also the sovereignty of God when she met and encouraged her former master upon the death of his child: he should not be 'so grief- stricken, for the child had been given to him by God, and nothing could happen beyond His will' (Oldendorp 1987: 313).

It's possible that Magdalena's performative acts of righteousness were a syncretistic admixture of Catholic doctrine, her understanding of the Old Testament sacrifices, and what she experienced from traditional West African religions. Before her conversion and work with the Moravians, Magdalena imagined a wrathful God easily angered by the slightest disobedience or ingratitude; his will could never be questioned without raising his ire. She made continual sacrifices to protect her from falling out of God's favour.

Her attempts at 'works-righteousness,' which were often expressed in acts such as burning her fruit and other sacrificial offerings, suggested to the Moravians that she misunderstood the finished work of Christ on the cross and the spiritual freedom that was possible through belief in him. Even as her theology was incomplete regarding how God testifies to his own character in Scripture, her understanding of Christology was also non-existent. Magdalena 'held vague notions of the Trinity likely drawn from her Catholic upbringing and remained unfamiliar with the idea that the Son of God had become a man, and that he saved and redeemed mankind through His death' (Oldendorp 1987: 313).

In her own studies, Magdalena noted differences between what her Catholic upbringing taught her of Christ, contra what Christ testified of himself in Scripture. Her 'awakening' to these truths (as the Moravians referred to a Spirit-wrought deeper understanding of the things of God), resulted in a covenant commitment to the Moravian community and public proclamation of her fidelity. Regarding her motivation for the tangible outworking of her awakening, which was usually suspect to the surrounding

community (and remains suspect to Antiracist scholars today), the conversion that joined her to Christ and the Moravian community would not have been necessary for any temporal reason: she was already manumitted (retired by the Carstens), so there was no motivation there. Neither did her conversion stem from a longing for community in her declining years; she had developed strong communities in her decades on the island. That her conversion sprang from a genuine belief that Christ is precisely who he declares he is should not be controversial in scholarly evangelical circles. Her legacy is honoured best when her testimony and conversion are taken at face value, and according to her own explanation of its meaning.

In 1736, Magdalena fully professed a biblically Protestant Christology. By then, she was an elderly woman, and the Moravian community was just four years old with its most difficult years of persecution yet to come. She joined the St. Thomas Moravians, and her valuable linguistic and literary gifts shone most deeply at the height of the community's religious oppression in 1737 and 1738. With more details to be provided in chapter two, she was divinely emboldened in unique ways when their Sunday School materials were confiscated and much of their leadership jailed due to false accusations from surrounding church leaders, Magdalena wrote directly to the Danish-Norwegian Queen Sophia Magdalene, appealing for their freedom from unjust imprisonment and arguing for the return of their materials.

Leading up to this watershed moment for the community, however, the Moravians, Africans and Europeans alike, approached her doubts much like Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, or perhaps as Priscilla and Aquila approached Apollos,[11] with hands and hearts of correction that would guide her into a biblically coherent understanding of God and his story. Ray A. Kea has done extensive research on the life of Magdalena, particularly how she would have understood her own conversion. Kea questions whether hers was a 'conversion' to an understanding of a European configuration of God as the European missionaries would have considered it, or was it an Africanization of a Christianity that she had laced together from religious experiences throughout her lifetime (Mancke and Shammas, 2015: 115-117).

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[11] Acts 8: 26-40, 18: 18-28. In both narratives, established disciples teach younger disciples the foundational principles of the way of the faith by correcting misapprehensions. In both instances, the inquisitor's lack of fuller understanding had developed based on either their own limited knowledge or through the practices of the culture around them.

With a father well-versed in Catholic doctrine and the Protestant church less than a hundred years after the Reformation, Magdalena might have understood the differences between the Catholic teachings of Christ's sacrifice and those of the Protestant tradition. It is difficult to know definitively whether any person's conversion is 'genuine,' or even how 'genuine' should be defined. For the Moravian community, 'genuine conversion' certainly involved the same as the earliest Christians in the book of Acts: putting down one way of life and its associated behaviours that led to spiritual and physical destruction, observing the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper that Christ instituted, and taking up the Story of death, resurrection, and eventual glorification, entering into the same life led by Christ as the first among many. Baas Martin[1] emphasised the mission in various venues and opportunities, that they might encourage Africans, free people of colour, and plantocracy alike to 'achieve a living knowledge of Jesus Christ and find peace for their souls in him.' (Oldendorp 1987: 325). What is clear is that Magdalena embraced the story of Christ's sufferings and the life of the persecuted people of God. She willingly chose the community, though it was the more difficult path. Kea himself admits 'the new faith defied established authority, infused the slaves with ideas of liberation, and was a nursery of revolt. The new converts were attacked and beaten, books were burned, and church services disrupted' (Mancke and Shammas, 2015:115- 117, 128).

Considering the evidence, I propose that Magdalena's conversion was genuine. The veracity of her conversion is confirmed through her fuller understanding of her experience of God, her lack of other motivations such as manumission or greater social status, and her willingness to enter to commit her life to a beleaguered cultural minority of proven social outcasts who were persecuted for the faith she claimed.

Magdalena's story is also significant in how the story of regional power is told. Contrary to the current Antiracist theories that Europeans dominated the continent, the history of the powerful Dahomey empire, with whom Magdalena and many of the island's Africans were familiar, suggests that the Europeans were more ancillary characters rather than the leading players, at least in terms of trafficking that brought Magdalena to the New World. Considering Dahomey history, the small groups of white traffickers and traders entered into a trade agreement with the more dominant, vast, and well-developed

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[1] *'Baas.'* A Dutch Creole honorific meaning pastor or shepherd.

Dahomey civilisation that had remained in power for centuries. With this knowledge of the regional powers, Europeans could not rightly be characterised as the dominant cultural and political force until the slave ships arrived in the New World. The above offers a radically different ethnohistorical premise than current and fashionable modern Antiracist theory would offer. Instead, it calls attention to the Dahomey's significant developments already established on the continent. With the fuller picture in mind, one should question Antiracist histories that argue that the slave trade was driven solely by White supremacy and the European quest for power, economic hegemony, racial superiority, and ethnic animus.

When Dama was new-born into privilege on the Gold Coast, she had no thought that her own people might overthrow her tribe and sell her from her homeland. She likewise was completely unaware of the role she would play in history-at-large, that she would rename herself 'Magdalena' upon her awakening to Protestant Christianity. Her birth date was not recorded, but the day of her death in 1745 was heralded when the Moravian community marked her life, her passing, and her unique role more than five thousand miles away from where her life began. With a legacy of strong and faithful witness, Magdalena was buried, mourned, celebrated by her community. Today, her legacy is being rediscovered by Africans and Europeans alike.

1.6.1   Interpreting Magdalena's Origin Story

I put forward that it was important to begin discussing the development of the St. Thomas community with 'the least of these,' so I began the narrative with oft-overlooked Magdalena. The details of the deeds for which she is remembered in the community will be introduced in chapter two. Magdalena's story is foundational to understanding the complexities of Christian conversion in the Atlantic and this research. Remembering that Magdalena was likely trafficked by an ethnic group with whom she shared African heritage, culture and custom, sets the stage to question the Antiracist approach of 'race as primary target identity' that is common in discussion of Christian communities who suffered during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. The indigenous and powerful Dahomey kingdom not only trafficked masses of Africans into the trade and profited from them as an export of 'goods,' they were notorious for enslaving fellow Africans to work their own royal plantations and quite comfortable with using Africans as fodder for human sacrifice to their gods; these sacrificed souls which likely numbered into (at least) the tens of thousands over four hundred years of rule.

For the Dahomey, African identity was of little consequence in their exploitation of people groups, and important only to the extent that the end-user of their trafficked 'goods' be of African descent. Therefore, understanding Dama, or Magdalena as she was known by the end of her life, requires a methodological approach that places her self-identity, primary associations, and all their most profound loyalties into consideration; not only hers but of the other St. Thomas Moravians that made their community unique in their communal association. A theological approach to their unique ethnography must be robust enough to parse both the primary and secondary identities of the St. Thomas Moravians, as well as the primary identities and loyalties of the communities that surround them. With that, the discussion moves to Denmark and Germany, with the spark of holy renewal carried by the emancipated St. Thomian Anton Ulrich to the Herrnhut Brethren under the leadership of their patron, Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf.

1.7   Holy Renewal: The German Herrnhuters' Story

As Magdalena, the future defender of the St Thomas Moravians, traversed miles and cultures to land at St. Thomas, repentance and renewal swept through churches five thousand miles away in Herrnhut, Germany. Sensing that the institutional churches had become more ossified establishment than reflective of the organic, New Testament movement with transformed lives, theologians and laypersons alike began to shape the idea of a 'return' movement that sought to reclaim the principles and priorities of the church's earliest days.

A massive theological and spiritual shift catalysed their rediscovery of the burden for the lost. A theological shift began several generations before the Moravian Leader Nicholas von Zinzendorf shifted their missiology, less than two hundred years after the Protestant Reformation. Protestant thinkers Jane Lead, Johanna Eleanora Peterson, and later Zinzendorf sensed that the same institutional corruption that had taken hold in Catholicism had also rooted itself in Lutheranism and Calvinism. These leaders began to imagine communities that would signify a return to New Testament simplicity and proprieties, with open displays of unity amidst heavy sectarianism. They also felt that the prophetic exposure of the excesses and deficiencies in the existing religious institutions was key to rediscovering the priorities of the New Testament.

Their writing and activities that marked that return movement; specifically, a renewed commitment to simple and unprogrammed prayer that was elevated as a sacrament.

The shift also featured a deep emphasis on the universal and invisible global church, a de-emphasis of secondary doctrinal differences among true believers, and the understanding that separation from the congregation to which a believer belonged was allowable but not necessarily encouraged or necessary. This activity garnered suspicion and hostility from the institutional denominations, thus creating tensions that sometimes escalated into violence against these smaller renewal movements. They were not only reintroduced to New Testament priorities but also to New Testament persecution. To this alternative witness, which was meant to both indict and invite the corrupt institutional church and its licentious surrounding cultures, Zinzendorf not only named the return movement as the Philadelphian Ideals, but he likewise gave shape and practical communal application to the impulses of the generations before. Thus, the Philadelphian Ideals were capturing what the early narrative theologians argued for two hundred years later:

> The church is a people on a journey who insist on living consistent with the conviction that God is the Lord of History. They thus refuse to resort to violence in order to secure their survival. The fact that the first task of the church is to be itself is not a rejection of the world or a withdrawal ethic, but a reminder that Christians must serve the world on their own terms: otherwise, the world would have no means to know itself as the world (Hauerwas 1980: 10).

In Copenhagen, at the coronation of Denmark's new King Christian VI, an emancipated African Christian from St. Thomas met the German Count Nikolaus Ludwig Reichsgraf von Zinzendorf und Pottendorf and several of his pious companions. This African, Anton Ulrich, was perceived as a direct answer to their revival-born prayers. A connection was providentially formed between the African believers, the Afro-Caribbean believers on St. Thomas, and the German Moravians.

1.7.1 Nicholas von Zinzendorf's Story

Nicholas von Zinzendorf's journey to this providential meeting involved separation, persecution, and Kingdom prayer. After roughly two centuries of nomadic, fugitive, and itinerant living due to religious persecution, the Moravians under Zinzendorf experienced what they perceived as a spontaneous spiritual outpouring at one of their communion services. The Moravians viewed the event as a culmination of spiritual and temporal happenings that marked the beginning of the 'renewed period' of Moravian church history, and their wandering soon turned into their stated kingdom mission to spread the Gospel around the globe, including into the New World and the Americas.

In the beginning, the impulse of the Philadelphian Ideals was to establish a multi-denominational community of the true children of God, defined by the posture of the heart and scriptural obedience rather than strict adherence to a particular confession or tradition.

Consistency between their ethics and epistemology was ultimate for these 'Philadelphians'.

Throughout this thesis, I will set out the St. Thomas Moravians' communal practice of the Philadelphian Ideals in contrast with the surrounding culture and examine their unique application of those ideals considering the life of the New Testament Church. The identifying markers of the Philadelphian ideals include a distinctive and simplified worship style; a return to the sacrificial New Testament reality (In Spirit and in Truth); less emphasis on doctrine, and a return to a 'religion of the heart' that married ethics and epistemology. Their focus resulted in a transformed life expressed as devotion to the suffering and death of Jesus. This inner life expressed itself outwardly with visible in-home worship that was characterised by lay leadership, an outward expression of unified community shown by the two grand pillars of Catholick Love and Apostolick Faith.

The inner lives of the Brethren also manifested a commitment to non- separatism from one's existing religious institutions; one should separate only if absolutely necessary and Spirit-directed. They maintained a commitment to engage less in denominational factions, and more on the universality of union with Christ and him as Head of the Church, manifesting and directing the persistence of the true Church universal. The fledgling beginnings of their reorientation of 'other-cultural' and 'other political' impulses can be seen in this. When the first Moravian missionaries arrive on St. Thomas' shores, these Kingdom- oriented priorities of Catholick Love and Apostolick Faith develop into the foundation for an alternative counter-polis. The presence of these values on the island, alongside competing cultural narratives as they expressed themselves through the community's Kingdom ethics, offered an invitation to Kingdom life that simultaneously indicted and invited destructive Cainian communities. From whence did this alternative spring in Zinzendorf's era? He observed that in his day, as it had throughout history, the desire for an alternative, more primitive New Testament witness arose from institutional strife and scandal. Just as the Old Testament prophets addressed Israel, Judah, and outsiders such as Egypt and Babylon, an alternative witness arose in 17th and 18th-century Europe to counter the institutional churches' decline, corruption, cultural compromise, and infighting.

As the bishop of the Moravian church, Zinzendorf was pastoral and was concerned for freedom of religious expression. Some accounts paint Zinzendorf's personality as mercurial, given to great joys, deep sorrows, and great flights of emotion. He was also well-known in his formative days for his sincere devotion. As a true pietist raised by a

pietistic family, his devotion showed through love letters written to Jesus as a young child and through deep and protracted seasons of prayer. The shape of the Philadelphian Ideals for the Count's generation grew out of three areas: his own research into a continuing historical community that followed the story more closely, his exposure to the original Philadelphian ideals of Jane Lead, and the work a generation before of Gottfried Arnold that focused on 'oppressed and persecuted Christians as the true witnesses of faith.' This earlier work by Arnold captures an early interpretation of the Philadelphia impulse, and the institutional church and culture's responses to it:

> The true Christians—according to Arnold—were not members of institutionalized Christianity but instead were the invisible spiritual Church, to be found among all nations and churches. Dirk Fleischer calls Arnold's work a "critical turn" ("*kritische Wende*") in the history of ecclesiastical historiography by maintaining that the critical historian must take a position independent ("*unparteiisch*") of traditional dogmas and church institutions. Consequently, Arnold's work greatly influenced Enlightenment thinkers. Interestingly, it appears that from the outset Zinzendorf conceived his church history as an alternative to Arnold's renowned work. Like Arnold, Zinzendorf wished to write the history of the "true church," consisting of the true children of God who kept their faith alive independent from the institutionalized church, but he looked for church history texts that were not what he called "*Ketzerhistorien*," or histories of heretics" (Peucker 2009: 4).

Understanding Zinzendorf's approach to the alternative community that permeated the St. Thomas African Moravians requires understanding of two things: his view of the persistence of the true church throughout history, and the degradation of many religious institutions in mid-eighteenth-century Europe. More will be said of the Herrnhuters' alternative theological and communal approach and the resulting persecution-fire they drew as I explore a rationale that explains the persistence of hostility toward New Testament-oriented Christians.

The result of returning to New Testament church impulses and priorities brought forward two important developments: the gathering of like-minded saints seeking refuge who took a great interest in the Philadelphian Ideals. Beginning in 1722, asylum seekers fleeing religious persecution in Moravia and Bohemia were granted permission by the Count to live peacefully on his sizable property at Berthelsdorf. The count's family were a landed family of nobility from Dresden. As such, Zinzendorf purchased the lower and middle portions of Berthelsdorf's land tract from his grandmother in 1722. Two years later, he acquired the upper estates from his uncle. Rising prominently from the centre of the two massive land tracts was Zinzendorf's *schloss,* his castle or manor house named *Beth-el,* 'the House of God' by Zinzendorf himself and consecrated for the work of the Lord. One gains the impression that even in 1722, as refugees found space and comfort in the worship house of Berthelsdorf Castle, the building bore the warm humility of Pietism, with practical appointments and simple furnishing. It was absent the obvious

luxury, wealth, and power of Windsor Castle, which housed the great kings and queens of the British Commonwealth, or the towering Neuschwanstein Castle in Bavaria rising from the alpine landscape, and it was especially missing the decadence of France's Versailles. Though large, the Berthelsdorf *schloss* was plain and simple, providing ample space for worship meetings, classes, love feasts, and times of communal prayer and devotion. Religious refugees from different countries, denominations, and religious traditions, settled on a small corner of this vast land to become the *Unitas Fratrum,* literally the 'Unity of the Brethren.'

They worshipped in Zinzendorf's manor home, offering a revitalisation of the Brethren movement that had begun in 1457 Bohemia. As the number of Brethren families grew, not only did they unwittingly create an alternative witness for the church and state around them, but they created an alternative community that had not before been seen in Herrnhut. They worshipped in Zinzendorf's manor home and lived on his land. He became their patron and, later, their spiritual leader.

A second major development grew out of their return to prayer, as the refugees felt that prayer in their own institutions had either grown stale through pre-written prayer books, or that prayer had been marginalised and de-prioritised through doctrinal hooliganism, the collateral damage of theological crossfire. As the community forged a new identity, and as Zinzendorf and others took on the role of Bishops and gave the community accountability, vision, and direction, new families continued to arrive to find simplicity, safety, freedom and shelter at Berthelsdorf; their numbers continued to grow. With prayer as a priority and a sacrament, regular and frequent prayer meetings abounded and were well attended. The brief stanzas of the Moravian hymn *'*Gathering Place of All Believers,' captured the unified communal qualities and the centrality of Christ that was longed for at the *schloss:*

> The gathering place for all believers
> is where their hearts and treasures,
> Wherein lives their Savior Jesus Christ
> and their lives are already here (Rohse, 1967: 1023).

The curtains of the *schloss* pull back to offer a picture of the Brethren's peace away from the din of their own denominations; at Berthelsdorf, they found the safety to simplify their faith, grow spiritually, and worship freely, with sacrificial purpose and outward mission in mind.

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[12] Luke 10:38-42

On 13 August 1727, as Magdalena was learning a new culture as an enslaved woman now removed from all she had known as an elite on Benin's coast, a revival fire hit the Brethren at Berthelsdorf. This move of the Holy Spirit manifested as a 'spontaneous spiritual outpouring' at their communion service that day. To the Brethren, this was seen as a visitation of the Spirit that left them emotionally and spiritually broken, yet supernaturally repaired; they remained in a doxological posture of prayer for some time afterwards. This transformative moment established them as an independent religious community, not merely an assembly of exiles from differing confessions and traditions (Peucker 2021: 2). To historians, this is seen not only as 'the culmination of a series of happenings so significant that it marked the beginning of the 'renewed period' of Moravian Church history but as having even greater and lasting force as the sprouted seed of the entire Protestant mission movement (Oldendorp 1981: xvii).

Considering the events that transpired within that same year, its significance hits deepest when the outpouring is seen as an echo of the Upper Room prayer meeting spoken of in the Book of Acts where Christ's disciples, including Mary the mother of Jesus, his brothers, and men and women together were first found in 'waiting prayer' by the Holy Spirit. The early saints had just been instructed by the resurrected Christ to wait on his Spirit in prayer at Jerusalem. They had just received the promise of the Spirit and the direct promise of supernatural power from their Saviour to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth; they watched him astonishingly ascend into the heavens and out of their sight, only to experience a week later the communal power and presence of God so profoundly that they all 'continued with one accord and purpose, devoted to prayer. Like the Brethren who would come many generations later, they were men and women bound together by Christ and of one purpose, promise, mission, and God - in a significant posture of repentance and prayer. Charles Georg Andreas (C.G.A.) Oldendorp (1721-1787), the Moravians' chief diarist for all mission efforts to the Caribbean, recorded this period as an expression of the Brethren's 'grateful love for Jesus Christ, a fervent desire to follow his commandment and bring to him more souls; particularly those hitherto belonging to nations that had been completely unaware of the universal salvation in Christ, still living without him in perilous darkness, in order to serve him with the light He had bestowed on them' (Oldendorp 1987: 270).

From this outpouring of the Holy Spirit came many answers to their supplications, but it's likely that no answer was as significant to their future trajectory as the Brethren's propitious meeting four years later with the emancipated African, Anton Ulrich. Ulrich's contribution to the narrative comes from his position as a liminal figure standing between cultures, and his concern for the lives of the enslaved on St. Thomas. It is not that he was unconcerned or undisturbed over their enslaved condition, but that concern was eclipsed by his desire for their awakening to the Gospel of Christ and their spiritual growth. As an emancipated man himself for whom physical freedom has been made real, his priorities raise arguments today against the Antiracist narrative of a singular focus on emancipation, system overthrow, and relief of ethnic persecution as a primary and sole driving concern. Ulrich's perspective is made even more compelling since his primary interest seems to be drawn from an identity in Christ that eclipses temporal revolution or physical emancipation. He enters the story of the Herrnhuters with a burden and zeal for the kingdom mission that they will come to share.

1.7.2 Anton Ulrich's Story: Enslavement to Freedom

The Brethren's renewed vigour, vision and divine commission were partly fulfilled by meeting Anton Ulrich, an African man enslaved on St. Thomas Island. Having been emancipated and now employed as a free man in Europe, Ulrich had travelled far from his siblings in the Danish West Indies. He found himself in Copenhagen as a personal servant to one Count Laurwig. Laurwig was a wealthy dealer who had secured his riches by directing slaves, rum and molasses through the Danish West India and Guinea Company. It's unknown when Ulrich turned to Christianity. Still, once he was in Denmark and away from the constraints of St. Thomas Island and its strict religious and ethnic persecution, he pursued the catechising that had been denied him as an enslaved man.

Ulrich was baptised, most likely permissible because his status as a free man erased the day's hot-button question of whether baptism should lead to manumission for the enslaved. What's notable of his awakening is that an 'other-cultural' ethos marked it: according to historian Katherine Gerbner, 'Ulrich's conversion to Christianity represented a model of slave conversion that embraced both spiritual and earthly salvation' (Gerbner 2018: 146). It should be noted that Gerbner imposes the word 'conversion' on the St. Thomas Moravians, but they themselves did not use the language of 'conversion.'

Instead, they referred to a shift in identity and understanding as an 'awakening' wherein they 'became troubled about their salvation' (Oldendorp 1987: 297).

Like Zinzendorf and his companions, Anton Ulrich attended King Christian VI's coronation and festivities on 6 June 1731. The King's coronation brought them all to Denmark to honour the new King and Queen; divine providence caused them to meet in the throng of revellers. Amidst the ceremonies and revelling, Ulrich not only shared with the Herrnhuters the inhumane conditions for the enslaved on the island but that his siblings still lived there under those sufferings. His sister Anna had converted to Christianity but had no one to disciple her in the way of the faith. As if answering their prayers for purpose born from their revival moment, Anton explained his inclination that St. Thomas island's people of colour, enslaved and free, were ripe for Christian mission and discipleship if someone were willing to go and live as one of them.

Anton Ulrich unloaded more and more of his burden for the St. Thomas Island saints and the unconverted he had left behind. Zinzendorf invited Ulrich to share his compelling story with the exiled Christian community of Brethren at Berthelsdorf. After his departure, a significant letter soon followed from Ulrich: 'I will never forget that I was in your blessed home,' he wrote, 'and whenever I think about the practice of Christianity among you, all I want to do is think about my sins, and love the dear Lord...'[13] It seemed that Ulrich discerned by watching their Christian lives and devotion that they were a different sort of Christian community than he was familiar with, and that perhaps not only was he an answer to their prayers, but they might be an answer to his. For it was Ulrich's custom to go from church to church and share the horrors of slave life on the island, appealing to various churches to send missionaries to the Danish West Indies while educating on the loose morals of the island's 'Christian' *Bläncken,* those who were either White or who were a part of the plantocracy system.

In this letter regarded as the catalyst for the mission effort to St. Thomas Island, Ulrich shared the deplorable conditions endured by Afro-Caribbeans there. He also told of the free and slave community's need for Christ, and the need for new converts to worship truly and openly. His own recently converted sister Anna remained enslaved on a company plantation, unable to worship in freedom, and floundering without adequate

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[13] Anton Ulrich to Zinzendorf, October 6, 1731. UA R.15.Ba.3.1. Gerbner translation.

discipleship despite the presence of already converted Blacks on the island. According to Gerbner, the response to Ulrich's appeal was recorded directly on a copy of his letter:

> This is the letter from the Black, Anton Ulrich... He created the opportunity for the St. Thomas [mission];' his status as a formerly enslaved person in the community "allowed the Moravians to claim his invitation as a direct invitation to evangelise, providing them with legitimacy that hadn't been received from slave owners" (Gerbner 2018: 138-140).

Ulrich's former slave status allowed the Moravians to claim that they had received a direct invitation to evangelise, providing them with legitimacy that had been withheld from slave owners. Considering that Ulrich the African is credited so positively and completely as the catalyst for the movement as early as 1731 with a scribe's note on his original letter, and considering the evidence of his Christian baptism, both suggest a proto-'other-cultural' display of ethics and epistemology that distinguished the community from the cultural norm, one that routinely denied people of lower class and African descent a pure and full Christian identity.

As Zinzendorf carried Ulrich's intel on the needs of St. Thomas to his spheres of influence, he increasingly shared with congregants - through groups large and small - the opportunities and obstacles that might lay ahead for the Brethren through this Spirit-opened door. Johann Dober and Tobias Leopold were sitting in the congregation, each aged under twenty-five. The two young men were far from each other in physical proximity, but near to each other in calling. They would not know of their shared experience until they met the next day, but their hearts burned within them as they heard Zinzendorf speak on 24 July 1731. The comparison was clear; their heart's response to these tales of St. Thomas echoed the first disciples' road to Emmaus experience, provoked and empowered by encountering the resurrected Jesus.[14] Neither could sleep that night of the Count's presentation, which each man independently interpreted as a move of the Holy Spirit directed at them in particular (Oldendorp 1987: 272).

Despite this newfound burden, both doubted they had truly had such an experience until they met the next day and learned of their mutual burden. As they shared and matched their experiences, they grew excited and took it as confirmation: the Spirit blew wind into the two men's sails, reset their rudders, and changed the course of their lives, moving them from Copenhagen and Herrnhut to the far-off Danish West Indies. The two men, now joined in purpose, wrote a letter dated 25 July 1731, meant to solicit the approval of fellow Brethren to undertake this mission to the Africans of St. Thomas.

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[14] Luke 24:13-35

Zinzendorf read their letter enthusiastically; it was just days before Anton Ulrich's arrival at Herrnhut, where their conversation would continue, be proven, and grow from burden to vision to mission.

Anton Ulrich shared with the Count and Nitschmann how he often sat alone on the sandy St. Thomas seashore, longing for the tangible presence of God that went far beyond his current faith and deeper than his eyes could see. Like the Brethren community on the night of their outpouring in 1722, Ulrich prayed earnestly that God would visit him tangibly and undeniably to enlighten him on deeper truths of Christian doctrine that were denied him as an enslaved man. He was burdened for his own sister, Anna, who shared his longing to know more about the God of the Bible. Like Anton, she prayed to God that a teacher would come to help her along the path of salvation.

Anton Ulrich also shared with the Herrnhut Brethren that many who claimed Christ on the island rarely lived lives honouring Christ. Rather than being conformed to his image, they conformed to the culture of self-absorbed cheaters, living lives of dissipation while exploiting and abusing whoever they could (Oldendorp 1987: 270-271). Among the religious people on the island was the St. Thomas Dutch Reformed congregation that had been established in 1660; the church existed before the city existed and three years before the first slave ships arrived, and with congregants employed in various spheres on the island, it seemed to have congregants with a wide spectrum of understanding the connection between their doctrine and their ethics. He shared with the Brethren that little time away from their forced labour made it difficult for enslaved Christians to pursue any kind of discipleship the way of the faith, or to seek their own spiritual growth through Biblical education.

Resistance toward these efforts from the watchful eyes of the plantocracy, slave owners and political and cultural gatekeepers, and from their fellow African enslaved who were given over to traditional religions, was strong and pervasive. (Oldendorp: 1987: 271). The more Ulrich shared of the island's cultural contours, and the more he enumerated the obstacles any missionary would face, the darker the picture became for a genuinely biblical Christian on St. Thomas Island.

1.8   The Hostile Environment of St. Thomas

Anton Ulrich knew from experience that the busy seaport of St. Thomas was a primary seat for the sugar, rum, and slave industries. Its natural resources and easy access along

trade routes made it the nexus of many cultures. This mixture of self-interests and tense power structures made the island politically and culturally complicated, with numerous obstacles for missionaries to navigate. These complexities call for details of the most vocal contributors to the island's culture and social structure.

1.8.1   St. Thomas Island Culture: The *Bläncken*

In the seventeenth century, the islands of St. Thomas and St. John were the last to be bid for European colonisation. Once the rest of Europe had overrun the land and carved out their empires, the Danes had only two islands to expand theirs. In 1671, Denmark chartered the Danish West India and Guinea Company to re-establish Denmark's slaving and colonising ventures in the region. In 1672 they sent two ships loaded with men to invade and subjugate St. Thomas; with their new rulers came new maladies. The indigenous Caribs who survived the new diseases were either enslaved or put to work under indentured servitude. The Danes' intention was the creation of a sugar industry run on slave labour.

'Christianisation' is widely regarded as the impetus for the takeover, cloaking the true intentions of imperialism, greed, and geopolitical expansion in religious language (Gerbner 2018: 14). By 1715, whites held power over the island's culture, politics, and economy and numbered five hundred and fifty-five, running one hundred and sixty plantations and thirty-two sugar mills. Its successful economy was achieved largely through the labour of three thousand-plus enslaved Africans. By 1717, the Danish also occupied nearby St. John (Carstens & Highfield 1997: 68-69), and class distinctions were clear. The plantocracy was the ruling class who gained political and cultural power on the island by force. They had a widely known reputation for leading lives of dissipation and licence that set the ethical standard of behaviour for ruling-class island whites, who were typically called the *Bläncken*.

Ulrich was not exaggerating regarding the licentious culture of the *Bläncken*. Records from Oldendorp's diary and the diaries of other travellers and traders affirm the African's view:

> Since the Whites … have been accustomed from childhood onward to be served by slaves, as well as to give those same slaves orders, they, therefore, became aware quite early of their external superiority over those poor creatures. From there, the transition to pride and a domineering character is quick and easy. Neither does the example which they witness on all sides in the treatment of slaves by others lead to the development of humanitarian sentiments (Oldendorp 1987: 157).

The reputation of the *Bläncken* was notorious on and off the island; it was a culture 'torpid of spirit and physical energy, except in sexual excess; indolent, and cruel' (Sensbach 2006: 33). An eyewitness observed:

> By nature, they are arrogant people, as well as unbecomingly proud. They are greedy in the extreme for praise, fame, honor, high rank, and an abundance of worldly things. They do not appear to chase after money simply to hoard it and avoid spending it. No, their greed for wealth focuses on their obsession for possessing numerous slaves and being able to own large tracts of land. They rely on what they own, and with that they ingratiate themselves with those whose association they value. They are quite vindictive, ill-tempered, quarrelsome, and quick to anger. They give orders with great authority so that their underlings tremble and shake every time they are called and asked to do something (Carstens, & Highfield 1997: 54-55).

Another traveller's witness supports Ulrich's testimony:

> They are ill-tempered, harsh, sour-looking and quite severe toward anyone subordinate to them. They are nasty and lazy, which is why they call anyone a slave whom they observe being industrious (Goslinga 1971: 342-344).

Ulrich and other literate African Christians were aware of the differences between what they read in Scripture, and what they observed among the (so-called) Christian plantocracy:

> When they learn to read the testimony of the Scriptures, the Negroes can see for themselves how to avoid the *false teachings and wicked life of the so-called Christians* under whom they live (Sensbach 2006*:* 55).

Neither the law nor the lax jurisprudence that ruled the island spoke well of the *Blänckens'* inclinations. Vicar James Ramsey of Teston in Kent, as he was moving from a pro-slavery to anti-slavery stance, noted that the impunity with which the *Bläncken* violated the female Afro-Caribbean converts was so severe that protection of the women's dignity would one day become a core pastoral concern of the Moravian mission:

> Their greatest trouble arises from the libidinous behaviours of overseers among female disciples, which, however, some masters check as much as lies in their power. The great secret of the missionary's management … is to contract an intimacy with them, to hear patiently their doubts and complaints, to condescend to their weakness and ignorance, to lead them on slowly and gently, to exhort them affectionately, to avoid carefully magisterial threatenings and commands. The consequences of his method are observed to be a considerable degree of religious knowledge, an orderly behaviour, a sobriety in their carriage … and a universal unimpeached honesty in their conduct (Ramsay 1733-1789, 2015: 163).

In intimate congregational meetings at the Berthelsdorf manor house, Anton Ulrich reported to the Herrnhut Brethren that there was little time outside the slaves' forced labour to pursue Biblical education or discipleship. However, overwork for the island's domestic servants also led to high exposure between slave and master, creating an altogether different set of issues. Domestic slaves and servants had intimate access to the intimate lives and inhumane and uncivil values among the plantocracy. With around-the-clock demand for attention to the master and mistresses' most intimate concerns, they

rarely knew personal autonomy of any sort. Houseworkers testified of ultimate debasements through the sloth and perversion of their masters, not only in matters of sexuality but also hygiene. It was common to be forced to sit alongside one's master or mistress' call of nature in the privy and clean their owners' private parts after toileting was completed (Carstens & Highfield 1997*:* 54-55). One historian has remarked that 'here, the master is so besotted with his own power that a vassal performed his most basic personal hygiene, providing the perfect image of white decadence' (Sensbach 2006: 35). The physical and constitutional weaknesses bred by laziness and dissipation, combined with the numeric imbalances in the two populations, put the *Bläncken* in constant danger of losing their dominant cultural status. The dominant culture turned to torture, extra-judicial punishment, and unjust laws to maintain political and cultural control. For lesser infractions such as attempting escape, insolence, disobedience, and laziness, all highly subjective categories, there was *sküring* (harsh lashings with the whip and goad). Amputations of tongues, hands, and feet were typical punishments. In instances of capital punishment, the most painful and humiliating public executions possible were enacted (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 232).

Any missionaries to the island would have to grapple with the knowledge that embedded within this plantocracy culture were pastors, elders and lay persons from self-identifying Christian congregations dispersed around the island; with a handful of exceptions, the destructive disobedience and inhumanity among the *Bläncken* were also active both in the institutional churches and in the broader culture. However, the *Bläncken* were not the only culture under the sway of idols and were not the only ones hostile to Gospel transformation; the island's unconverted Africans, with their various traditional religions, had brought with them cultures of their own out of which new cultures, hostilities, and alliances formed.

1.8.2   St. Thomas Island Culture: The Amina Nation

Much like Magdalena, mentioned earlier and who became a leader among the St. Thomas Moravians, most Africans imported into the Danish West Indies came from long-established cultures. They had deep knowledge of their surrounding tribesmen and their histories, beliefs, and habits in their homeland. The continent of Africa was not a blank sheet when Europe began its trading ventures; many tribes were well-developed civilisations, running and ruling with the same benefits and troubles as other developing societies worldwide. A significant number of the enslaved in eighteenth-century St.

Thomas were stolen from the region of West Africa that lies along the coast from the River Senegal to the Black Foothills.[1] By the time the diarist Oldendorp's research was published for the benefit of the Moravians, some knowledge of the interior of that region was gained through the advance of both Catholic Portuguese missionaries into Congo and Angola, and the European and French slave industry into Senegal and along the Gambia River (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 160). Oldendorp interviewed numerous imported Africans in the West Indies, notating their first-hand accounts of who they were, and from whence they had come. Among the tribes which Oldendorp categorised by language and geography, he noted the gold-rich Fula nation, the Sorua nation who were the enemies of the Fula and the whites, the neighbouring Mandinga, the Mandongo, the Jalunkan, the Bandi, the Kanga known for their iron ore commodities, the Mangree, and the Akkran.

However, the one tribe all others agreed was the most powerful and most feared nation on the coast was the Amina (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 161-162, 170). When the kidnapped were exported as human goods into the Trans-Atlantic slaving system, they carried their tribal identities, perceived social statuses, generations-old conflicts, and xenophobia with them. Thus on St. Thomas, rather than seeing themselves as a united group against the oppressive *Bläncken* colonisers, the Amina made war with the Europeans, and among other Africans (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 162-170). Other captured Africans feared the Amina, who for generations had traded gold, ivory and members of their tribes with the whites for iron and guns. The Amina, who possessed their own language, were slave owners themselves with their own established industry. They saw the opportunity for the expansion of their own imperialist venture when the Whites began to arrive.

A Tembu tribesman reflected on the character of the Amina as they ruled Africa's western coast:

> These people are terrifying to their neighbours due to their might and their cruelty. They wage almost constant war against the Fante, Akkim, Akkran, Beremang, Assein, Kisseru, Arti, Okkan, and Adansi. The seizing of captives is the sole cause for these wars. The Amina have firearms and poisons, while their enemies use bows and arrows for the most part. Internal warfare is often waged by the many heirs of the king and his vassal kings, who contest their right to rule. The attacks of the Amina, who are always ready to kidnap people, necessitate these precautionary measures (Oldendorp 1987: 163-164).

To gather information on the religious practices of each tribe, the diarist relied exclusively on first-hand information that the tribesmen themselves provided (Oldendorp 1987: 187). Much of it would comport with what Anton Ulrich expressed of the various tribes on the island. Aside from the Fula Mohammedans and the African Catholics already

converted in the Congo before their kidnap, it was common for those imported into the West Indies to turn to black magic and fetishes to understand and attempt to control the world around them. Both Europeans and other Africans noted that the Amina were witch doctors and witchcraft practitioners, with ferocious supernatural powers. Hostility toward cultural outsiders was fuelled by the view that black magic was likely the cause of trouble. Though natural causes like poison were commonly known to be used to bring about revenge deaths, the overarching cause of death was still ascribed to dark powers and rituals imbued with enough faith to kill on their own (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 175-176).

The Amina, like others from tribes kidnapped from the region, acknowledged one supreme deity called by a particular name. Many from the Amina nation acknowledge this god as Borriborri, who had a wife named Jankomaago, and a son they produced together named Jankombum. The son's function is as an intercessor before his father, who is supreme. The Amina prayed to their deity often at different times and places about all of life. In addition to offering prayers, they made sacrificial offerings for divine assistance through their priests, priestesses and prophets. These were seen as holy people who were intermediaries between God and tribe (Oldendorp 1987: 189-90). An enslaved Amina man who had once been a merchant said that in Guinea, 'Not much is known about sin because everyone considers his own actions to be right' (Oldendorp 1987: 176). While the *Bläncken* enculturated a darkened, self-centred view of society and ethics in the broader culture, and a corrupted view of Christ and man among some of their churchmen, the Amina and other tribes who practised witchcraft and sorcery brought a darkness of a different sort.

The *Bläncken* ironically perceived the Amina as:

> … the most difficult of Africans to control. They were fiercely independent, and resisted colonisation; they were considered the most unruly and barbaric of the nations, wilder, more murderous and devil-like in their nature than others, practising magic and devil-fantasies. They are unfaithful and warlike to all the other nations, headstrong and tyrannical (Carstens & Highfield 1997: 68-69).

The *Bläncken* and Amina communities were both committed to narratives that appealed to self-exaltation, self-interest, intimidation, dehumanisation, and brutal violence. The outworking of both narratives resulted in a toxic and abusive cultural stew that resisted anything that might change the landscape of these tribal identities, even a spiritual transformation that might threaten the economy, its long-held beliefs, its local gods, its associations, and its class system, but still heal the overall situation. Somewhere in this world that Anton Ulrich had escaped, his sister Anna and Magdalena from Great Popo were moving in the background, hungry for physical and spiritual freedom and

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personal security. Such were the dynamics of St. Thomas Island, which would resist any Christian missionary introducing a transformative spiritual opportunity. To enter a new culture that opposed all existing ones - especially as they upheld a delicate yet abusive ecosystem - was to risk life itself.

The African Anton Ulrich made a strong suggestion that the best way to reach St. Thomas' enslaved might be to not only *live among them,* but *be enslaved like them*. The Brethren community was sobered; they grew doubtful about the possible success of such a mission. They had, indeed heard from other quarters that *Bläncken* (European) slave owners were 'so hostile to Christian missions' that anyone who wished to penetrate the community would have to be a slave himself to even gain opportunities for discipleship (Gerbner 2018:147). In a spirit of 'other-cultural, other-political' understanding then, the two young Moravians Johann Dober and David Nitschmann requested to enter the system on the island *as slaves themselves* to gain access to plantation slaves of African descent. Sensbach interprets this as the two showing a willingness to associate themselves with the suffering Christ, they believed that Christ's martyrdom 'opened the doors of salvation to all the world's people, regardless of culture, ethnicity, or physiognomy' (Sensbach 2006: 49-51).

As a historian focused on the racial dynamics of the eighteenth-century Atlantic expansion, Katherine Gerbner is less optimistic about their motivations. She concludes that while their approach may reveal a general disregard for earthly standing, it also reveals that their concept of slavery to them was a malleable category, one that could be entered into by choice or force. For Gerbner, they displayed a deep ignorance of Atlantic slavery (Gerbner 2018: 147).

Speculations on motivations aside, ultimately, the two were denied entrée into the slave system by the culture's mores. Even though Brother Johann Dober would eventually be denied entry into the brutal system that was reserved for Africans alone, his proposal had taken Anton Ulrich seriously, and he stressed to the congregation and leadership that he was willing to pursue a mission that included giving himself over to the slaving system.

Clearly undeterred by the island's dark circumstances, or the request to approach as the 'least of these,' Johann Dober pressed into his own deputation with Tobias Leopold, and moved forward to 'offer their lives as a sacrifice to the will of the Savior and would gladly become slaves if they could win only one soul for him' (Oldendorp 1987: 273).

Moravian headquarters at Herrnhut affirmed them, likely driven by the enthusiastic Count Zinzendorf:

> … no possible hardship could dissuade him from his resolution, particularly if it was to be pursued jointly with his friend Leopold. Their joint resolution thus appeared to them to be more than a mere coincidence, and it brought them to conclude to lay the matter before the congregation in order to solicit approval of the Brethren and have their future work among the Negroes authorized and blessed by them (Oldendorp, 1987: 271-272).

1.9   Summary

The early Galatian Christians to whom Paul wrote experienced similar early persecution pangs to the Moravian community: social ostracism, suspicion, and resentment that grew into Cainian hostility and violence. We can see in each of their lives the elements that have earned them Sensbach's moniker, 'a Black Book of Acts.' Even as they are being brought together geographically, they are bound together spiritually with common life-of-Christ experiences. In the Book of Galatians, the Christian community's other-cultural ethos and obedience among these ardent, enthusiastic believers who were more reflective of Abel than Cain had heard the nature of Yahweh and the acts of Jesus. Yet Paul indicates that they had begun to falter and succumb to the false idols of Cain.

The reason may well be that the growing difficulty of this other-cultural community growing and rejecting cultural idols caused cultural hostility against them, making the Christian life difficult in their context, particularly for those who did not follow Paul's admonitions to other churches to 'count the cost' (Luke 14:28, Matthew 7:13-14). Some in the community had fallen back into their nationalism (Judaism), and the holds and priorities of their idols. This new life of 'the Way,' or 'new life in Christ,' was full of risk and uncertainty. Rather than embracing their new identity as their primary identity, they chose that which was old, familiar, and safe from persecution and scrutiny. It has never been the road to popularity, but the road to becoming a by-word: families casting kin into the streets because of this name of Christ, and exposure to violence at the hands of those who wielded their civic religion like a club or a sword.

Those who endured the hostility for the sake of their identity in Christ paid high prices, yet too many of the Galatians were shrinking back as fear stole their power to persevere. Paul addressed their identity confusion and cowardice with a two-Adam Christology, contrasting the lives of Adam and Christ and, by inference, the lives of Cain and Abel; life according to the flesh and life according to the Spirit; corruption and triumph; death and life. The flesh under the first Adam cannot produce righteousness; it

cannot produce life that lasts into eternity. Paul places their identity back with Christ, imploring the Galatians to follow the life-giving, transformational, sacrificial pattern of Christ and not of Adam or Cain, who can only bring failure, corruption and death in need of redemption. This earned the Galatians Paul's exhortation to 'do good to all, but especially those in the household of faith' perhaps because there was no love to be found in the Galatian streets; only in Christ and his community would they find acceptance and strength to endure the daily hostilities that awaited them.

By introducing Marotta (also known as Dama), Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf, Johann Dober, David Nitschmann, Tobias Leopold, and the Herrnhut community, the pieces of an other-political and other-cultural witness begin to assemble. Though each of them was geographically far from the Caribbean islands and the New World, one could say that covenantal Providence drew them together to seek a truthful narrative over false. For the Herrnhuters, it grew through separation from the prevailing yet compromised religious institutions and the spiritual outpouring of 1727 that convinced the community to return to a simpler and more primal Christianity, to first things, to community priority, and to New Testament principles. For Marotta, it came through the brutal uprooting from her native land full of idols to a new world likewise dominated by religious and cultural idols. For Anton Ulrich, it was through his own spiritual awakening, intense desire to see others know spiritual freedom and his own reckoning with the island's idolatry into which Marotta was enslaved and which held its grip on his remaining enslaved family.

In each geographic location, whether in Europe, Africa, or the Americas, the dominance and destruction of Cain was evident in the religious institutions, the culture, and the politics - marking the Cain and Abel dynamic of religious oppression as a human problem, and not one limited by race or ethnicity. The persistence of this kingdom-oriented dynamic is further exposed when the numerous geographic locations and ethnicities among our important players meet in Christ at St. Thomas, establishing a new missional community on the island's troubled, sandy shores.

Nevertheless, the providential arrival of these unlikely converts from diverse geographic locations to one marked by Cainian communities holds notes of a proto-assembly of the nations under Christ; a people living amongst hostile cultures and Cainian deception. Revelation 20:9-10 speaks prophetically of a world that comports with an ancient story, fulfilling the promise of the life for which they were created in Genesis 1

and 2. For those who have fallen under Cainian deception, those who have oppressed the people of God, it promises judgement:

> And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever (Revelation 20:9-10).

In contrast, Revelation 21 promises peace, and healing for the faithful. God's Abels have been kept faithful throughout redemptive history, and Christ has delivered from Cain's violent shadow. The community that has been the 'other-culture,' based on the politics of the coming Kingdom outlined in Isaiah, is now not only the dominant culture, it is the *only* culture - a new heaven, a new earth, and a people made new to worship freely and rightly:

> And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:22-27).

The prophecy's context is important, as it appears at the final justice gained for the persecuted faithful:

> If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin (John 15:18-22).

Thus, Scripture argues that the St. Thomas faithful, and similar faithful communities across eras and epochs who experience hostility for their faith, are always in a simultaneous common-experience state of living out the story and the life of Christ; this experience happens across geographic and historical lines. Though they are promised difficulty, they have likewise been promised justice and vindication; the promise has come through the prophets and Christ himself. This hope drove the Herrnhuters to create an alternative community of character, that brought Magdalena to sacrificial faith in Christ, and that drove Anton Ulrich's burden of the spiritual condition of his family still on St. Thomas. This was also the truth that exposed the wickedness of St. Thomas' Cainian communities, and that would sustain Dober, Leopold and Nitschmann under adverse spiritual and social conditions on St. Thomas.

2. CHAPTER 2: THE MORAVIANS' 1ST MISSION WAVE

Johann Dober and Tobias Leopold's year of preparations swung their faith like a pendulum between doubt and affirmation as they visited Moravian communities in and around Germany to gain approval for their project. Despite the strong support given by Count Zinzendorf, their resolve and call were examined extensively before the Herrnhut community before a majority deemed their mission as God's divine call. Initially, they were met with crossed arms, scepticism, and scowls throughout the year as their call to the Caribbean island was challenged and scrutinised.

2.1 Isolation: From Europe to the New World

The two young men heard many arguments against going from their fellow Brethren: the trip was too dangerous, as few people survived the voyage, much less the tropical conditions of the island; too expensive, with basic necessities imported and out of reach for the poor, too risky, as other adventurers with more resources than they had ventured into the Danish West Indies and starved to death, or finally, too ill-conceived; why bother evangelising the pitiable enslaved a world away? (Oldendorp 1987: 276).

Martin Linner, Johann Dober's elder, had plans for him that excluded a life in the Americas. The very thing that had made Dober's departure to the Caribbean attractive was also what made him valuable in Germany. His status as an unmarried man devoted wholly to the work of pastoring without distraction made him attractive to many leaders (Oldendorp, 1987: 272). Resistance only grew as Dober and Leopold revealed their idea to enter St. Thomas Island with an altruistic and sacrificial twist: they would enter as enslaved people. Brethren objected to their plans with full throats, meeting the two men's certainty with predictions of certain death at the end of a likely fruitless endeavour. Anton Ulrich, the catalyst for their missionary burden that revolved around the spiritual development of his still enslaved sister, also grew doubtful and declared it a terrible idea. Ulrich pulled his support, yet the two men remained undeterred and continued to canvas their congregations. Dober's response to each congregation's misgivings was both solemn and spiritual:

"Since I was asked to explain my reasons for the proposed initiative, I can tell you that my intention has never been just to take a trip of some duration but only to dedicate myself more firmly to our Savior. Ever since the count has returned from the trip to Denmark and spoken of the condition of the slaves, it has had such an effect on me that I have not been able to get it out of my mind. So I decided that if another brother wished to accompany me, then I would give myself over to slavery in order to tell them as much as I have learned about our Savior, because I firmly believe that the word from the cross manifests a particular power on the soul even in conditions of degradation. Concerning my role, I thought also that even if I were not to be of any use to anyone in particular, if I could only test thereby my obedience to our Savior, I shall let the congregation consider as my only reason the fact that there are still souls in the islands who are not capable of belief because they have heard nothing of the word." (Oldendorp, 1987: 273).

Dober and Leopold affirmed on numerous occasions that they were willing to offer their lives as a sacrifice to the 'will of the Savior and would gladly become slaves if they could win only one soul for him' (Oldendorp, 1987: 273).

After more than a year of congregational and pastoral review, the community agreed to seek the will of the Lord by drawing lots.[1] Again, by providence, Brother Dober drew his own lot, upon which were written the words, 'Let the boy go; the Lord is with him.' All doubts were removed, deliberations ceased, and Pastor Linner, the once resistant elder who wished to keep Dober in Germany as his successor, was the very elder who laid hands and blessed his journey on behalf of the entire congregation. However, it was only Dober who was approved to go from the duo; Tobias Leopold would be held back, and in his place went a young married member soon to turn missionary named David Nitschmann who had also heard Anton Ulrich speak that first encounter in Copenhagen (Oldendorp, 1987: 273).

The two young men left Herrnhut the following year in August 1732, with the blessing of their congregation and the funding of several patrons who likewise understood their undertakings, such as Copenhagen's Countess von Stollberg at Wernigerode. She wholeheartedly 'encouraged them to risk everything for the Saviour, who was, in her own words, definitely worth giving one's life for' (Oldendorp, 1987: 273).

Dober and Nitschmann would need all words of encouragement and faith as they moved through Copenhagen; at the ship's docks, they encountered what seemed an insurmountable brick wall as those who controlled the slave trade denied them entry to sail as enslaved people. As the men confronted reality and their plans to enter the St.

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[1] Moravians developed a particular form of 'lot casting' that involved written participation of the community. The Old Testament saints drew lots through casting the *Urim* and the *Thummim* stones (1 Samuel 28:6, Numbers 27:21, Deuteronomy 33:8, etc.). Scripture is silent and non-prescriptive regarding how the stones were fashioned, what they looked like, and exactly how they were used.

Thomas community slipped away, the crew's laughter roiled into a tsunami of humiliation at their ideas of sacrificing life, health, and social standing to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the unfortunate enslaved. Those who were familiar with the conditions in the West Indian islands brought the two men face to face with profound reality: even if they survived the arduous journey across the seas, there was no assurance of survival, not even for people with means. Indeed, there was little admiration to be found aboard the ship.

The final brick in the wall came in the form of Senior Chamberlain von Pless, who informed them that 'no white man could be used as a slave on St. Thomas' (Oldendorp, 1987: 276).[2] It quickly became clear, as their reputation and intentions spread, that no ship of the West India Company would accept them as passengers on such a 'fools' errand' (Oldendorp, 1987: 277).

As they pondered their next steps, they were struck by a meditation in a yearly book of Scripture quotes compiled annually by Count von Zinzendorf, from the Book of Numbers: 'hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?' (Numbers 23:19). The young missionaries became resolute once again when the royal family was made aware of their presence in Copenhagen, and the purpose of their mission. The two young men received patronage from Queen Sophie of Denmark and Norway, wife of Christian VI, and from the sister of Christian VI, the perpetually single Princess Charlotte Amalie of Denmark, for whom St. Thomas' port of Charlotte Amalie was named.

The Princess offered financial support that would keep the young men from starvation in their first year ashore and a Dutch Bible (Oldendorp, 1987:277) that would nourish them spiritually. Such support came through association with the Count and Countess of Stollberg-Wernigerode, who had publicly encouraged their mission before the men ran into the brick wall of circumstance. With the queen's favour, they were allowed aboard the ship of Mr. Conrad Friedrich Martens, an official of the royal court. In October 1732, they boarded at no cost to the church and began their ten-week voyage to St. Thomas. They didn't journey as slaves, but as craftsmen. Oldendorp observed of the Kingdom-centric nature of their encouragement, they were carried along by friends 'both

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[2] See also Svend Cedergreen Bech, *Oplysnying* of Tolerance 1721-1784, Volume 0 of the series, *Danmarks Historie,* edited by John Dunstrup and Hal Koch (Copenhagen: *Politikens Forlag,* 1977), pp 185-88.

highborn and lowborn' (Oldendorp, 1987: 277), with all classes bearing witness to this other-cultural, other-political expression of the church.

After ten weeks at sea, 7 December 1732 marked their first sight of St. Thomas Island. The tropical land mass rose to find both men still in relatively good health despite the difficult journey. On 13 December, the men disembarked and found themselves settling into the work of preaching the gospel to the poor. They soon found Anna Ulrich, the sister of Anton the African whom they had met years before in Copenhagen. Through Anna, they found another sibling Abraham, and the four frequently visited with each other. It was likewise through Anna Ulrich's influence that the Moravian brothers brought to others a priority to Kingdom prayer, discipleship and evangelism; the idea that once one experiences awakening or conversion, a burden to tell others about one's own awakening is accompanied by the doxological response evident in a transformed life. They corrected many misconceptions regarding the Bible and its role in their spiritual development, with one convert holding Scripture in sudden high regard and proclaiming, 'The book will make me wise!' (Oldendorp, 1987: 281).

One indication that the young men received as spiritual confirmation of their call came in meeting a baptised Free Negro blacksmith named Alexander, whom Brother Nitschmann had seen in a dream while they were still at sea and hundreds of miles from the shores of St. Thomas. He had dreamt of the blacksmith, wherein the Holy Spirit revealed that this African man would advise them of their next steps once they reached the island. He shared the dream with Dober, and they quickly faded until the end of 1732 when they heard there was a blacksmith named Alexander on the island, newly baptised and practising Christianity. In their early ministry travels across the island, they set out to find the man and, upon meeting, found a kindred brother with whom they could discuss all manner of subjects, from the divinity of Christ to the priority of prayer, hymn- singing, the nature of the Trinity, 'creation, sin, sacrifice, baptism, the last supper, and faith' (Oldendorp, 1987: 282). They walked with him through his struggle to break free from the idolatry of alcohol that ruled his life, and prayed fervently that he might overcome other vices that hindered his full commitment. Despite his struggles with the faith (and his eventual rejection of their extreme pietism), the missionaries still took Alexander's manifestation from dream to flesh as confirmation that they were fulfilling the Lord's divine call to the island.

As much as they were met with welcome by those like Anna Ulrich who wanted to be discipled in the Christian life and Moravian community habits, the Moravians met with more opposition like Alexander the Blacksmith. Numerous enslaved Africans and free people of colour pointed out the hypocrisy of the island's *Bläncken*, who also claimed Christianity. They demanded the rationale for those who claimed Christ, yet also claimed to stand on the Bible to justify their cultural superiority, lascivious behaviour, and debasement of their fellow man. Dober and Nitschmann's pastoral approach may have been a deterrent to interest leading to conversion, as Gerbner observes their argument for a disconnect between inner slavery and outer slavery was regarded with disdain by many potential converts. 'They argued that 'inner slavery' was not connected to 'outer slavery,' and that a slave could be a better Christian, perhaps even more "free" than his or her master.

The Moravians' brand of Christianity that allowed any situational separation of ethics from epistemology didn't appeal to the existing population of Black Christians on the island. Most had worked hard to increase their social and religious standing among the elites and free people of colour (Gerbner 2013: 149). Some aggressively demanded explanation why the Moravians forbade certain sins of them, when the same debauchery was justified by the 'Christian' *Bläncken*. Oldendorp records that the young Moravians addressed these inconsistencies in a straightforward manner, 'maintaining that whoever served sin, be he black or white, could not be a true Christian.'

Many were dissatisfied with their answers and felt that the Moravians' strict pietistic codes went beyond Scripture, encroaching on too much of ordinary life. An African once angrily confronted their extreme Pietism: 'You wish to forbid everything! Who can become such as you would have people be?' (Oldendorp, 1987: 281). Yet rather than relax their position and preach grace as the next wave of missionaries would do, the first wave of Brethren missionaries wept bitter tears for the souls of those resistant to new life and pressed in more deeply to the Moravians' Pietistic teachings. They also faced resistance from those who practised traditional African religions, as well as from other Christian denominations on the island who saw them both as a threat to their own adherents. The young missionaries avoided heated apologetic debates, and to their best ability, maintained friendly relations with their resistant and sometimes hostile neighbours.

The opposition the Moravian Brethren faced should have indicated that trouble simmered beneath the island's many fragile social hierarchies. Little did they suspect, as they set first foot onto their mission field, that they also stepped into a smouldering powder keg of cultural, ethnic, political, and religious upheaval. Within a year, bloodshed was to come that they could have never anticipated. Within a year of their arrival, the conflicting constituencies on the island mentioned in the previous chapter such as the Amina tribesmen, the free people of colour and other traditional Africans, squared off against the elites, the *Bläncken*, and the plantocracy. Eventually they turned on each other in a bloody battle, whose effects would define the Moravians' persecution in the years to come.

2.2   Culture Clash: The St. John's Rebellion

The Cainian legacy on the island expressed itself through differing cultural idolatries: money, wealth, class, position, compromised religious institutions, and violent spiritual forces indulged by the West African population. This created a tense overall atmosphere on the island. As Dober and Nitschmann settled into the difficult work among conflicting cultures, they soon learned that simmering beneath the surface of uneasy social tensions was a cultural clash that would soon erupt on a neighbouring island as the St. John's rebellion. The retelling of events here will help to amplify the ability of false worldviews to create communities guided by specific values, ethics, and agendas that mimic Christian communities that raise their antagonism. This lay a foundation for understanding how the Moravian community's second wave of missionaries rose against this cultural backdrop to emerge as a Kingdom-centric, other- cultural and other-political force built on Dober and Nitschmann's fragile but important foundation.

Colonised by the Danes, St. John and St. Thomas islands shared many of the same cultural dynamics. The island topography made escape improbable for the enslaved, and attempts halted with 1767 legislation between Spain and Denmark that required each country to return runaways to their respective islands (Oldendorp, 1987: 234-236). With escape barred, thoughts of liberation turned to revolt.

In 1733, the year after Dober and Nitchsmann reached the island, the Amina led an uprising to take control of St. John. The revolt lasted six months and became an international foreign policy spectacle. Oldendorp notes through testimonies that a principal cause for the rebellion was the hypocrisy, brutality, ongoing humiliation, and severe dehumanisation committed by the *Bläncken* (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 235-236).

By the diarist's account, the general Afro-Caribbean community strategised by scrutinising their oppressors and attacking their numerous points of weakness.

Several of the Amina rose to leadership among the African revolutionaries, including a woman of significant authority named Breffu (Norton, 2018). As plans for the revolution came together, weapons were secured and hidden. The Amina organised the rebellion according to their own tribal political system. Meeting at night to avoid detection, the revolutionary structure and organisation meant that the Amina style of government could slide in place easily if the rebellion proved successful (Pannett, 1733:17). However, the revolution was so extreme and the memory of Amina rule so fresh for many of the Afro-Caribbeans that many who were initially involved divorced themselves from the rebellion, fearing life under Amina dominance should they prevail. Sensbach writes:

> In envisioning their own freedom, the Aminas operated out of old antagonisms and the desire to rule their former African subjects again. This was no pan-African coalition united in racial accord against a common white enemy, but a master plan born of one people's exclusive sense of superiority. Despite their numbers, the Aminas were still a minority among the more than one thousand enslaved on the island. Many of their enemies preferred to fight alongside the *Bläncken* rather than serve the Aminas again (Sensbach, 2006: 17-18).

Led by mostly Amina rebels, the rebellion spread quickly across the island. In a short time, three-quarters of the *Bläncken* population fell into Amina hands. In acts of long-held retribution, many of the plantocracy were raped, dismembered, and brutally murdered. Breffu herself killed the entire Krøyer family, listed as among the plantocracy elites (Norton, 2018). One testimony from that night is noteworthy not just for the Amina's brutality, but for their use of religious ritual in the process, with mention of a ritual reminiscent of Old Testament sacrifice and New Testament baptism:

> On command, slaves at the … plantation of John Reimert Soedtman burst into this living quarters, forced him to strip and dance naked – parodying the forced dancing common to the trafficking of African bodies on and off the auction block … As he danced awkwardly, no doubt knowing he danced for both retribution and for his life, the insurrectionists jabbed a sword through him, sheared off his head, gutted his body and – in an apparent ritual of purification or cleansing, they "washed themselves in his blood." Soedtman's wife was visiting neighbouring St. Thomas during the uprising, and so her life was spared. That night however, their thirteen-year-old daughter met the same fate as her father and her body was dumped – ceremoniously – on his eviscerated corpse. The rebels disappeared into the early dawn (Pannet, 1733).

As the neutral Africans expected, the Amina now viewed anyone outside of the Amina's revolutionary rebellion, including both them and the Creoles, as enemies resisting the resistance. With the upper hand, the Amina brutalised the African and Creole populations just as they did the whites. For six months, the Amina rebels 'became masters of the island, robbing, scorching, burning, destroying, and committing excesses … but without the preparation needed to maintain their conquest' (Oldendorp, et al. 1987: 236).

In 1734, the defeated colonisers on St. John and St. Thomas appealed to Martinique's French militia for help. The governor appealed to the 'Christian kinship' of the colonisers and their right to dominance, saying, 'As Christians, you cannot allow slaves to triumph over our weakness and render us victims of their rebellion' (Sensbach 2006: 24). France amassed a 'Christian' militia made up of Swiss, French, and free Blacks to preserve 'Christian' interests, in exchange for pieces of neighbouring St. Croix Island in return. Exposed once again were the nationalism, geo-political interest, and empire expansion lurked behind humanitarian action cloaked in the language of 'Christian kinship.' This can be noted as another agreement between disparate Cainian communities who misconfigured the people of God according to national interests to suit temporal agendas.

Once French military assistance arrived from Martinique, the Amina rebels were defeated; some by capture, others by suicide over surrender. The colonists' victory came with grave future consequences for the rest of the Afro-Caribbean population, setting the stage for the types of brutal punishments that the Moravian Christians would eventually endure for their faith.

Surprisingly, in the Atlantic world so significantly shaped by slavery, the oppressed did not always make common cause against the dominant class. Old enmities lingered; coalitions were fragile; and the rulers coerced betrayals from the vulnerable. For all the boldness, creativity, and careful planning that shaped dozens of slave revolts during nearly four centuries in the Americas, it was almost impossible to make them succeed, and in their wake, the enslaved were left with the same urgent problem of daily survival (Sensbach 2006: 24).

The resulting cultural climate on St. Thomas was one of increased violence, suspicion, resentment, and terror. The *Bläncken* became even more harsh in their treatment of their labour force, making severe examples of anyone who resisted. Enforcing and expanding amputation as punishment, extremities littered the wandering, five-mile road known as the Path that cut through the plantations. Slaves encountered grisly reminders of the penalty for disobedience along The Path as they ran errands and tended to duties: disembodied hands, feet, tongues, arms, legs, and in ultimate cases, severed heads littered the road. Surviving amputees were left to continue their work minus their body parts. As a result of the defeat of the uprising on the sister island across the water, the Danish colonial power that ran St. Thomas emerged as even more powerful,

and the remaining slaves were scrutinised, exploited, dehumanised, tortured, and terrorised even more intensely than before.

The remaining free people of colour were marginalised to one ghetto district to live a tense existence among all cultures. It is in this seedbed of punishment for activities considered subversive (including religious activity that threatened the dominant cultural narrative on the island) that the seeds of a counter-polis germinated, an alternative witness that began with further baptisms by the Moravian community according to a truthful narrative of Scripture (Sensbach 2006: 9). Their counter polis would establish itself firmly with the arrival of the second wave of missionaries, the inheritors of the small flames set alight by Johann Dober, David Nitschmann, as Tobias Leopold was finally allowed to join the work after being initially denied.

2.3   The End of the 1st Mission Wave

Despite their missteps, and the lack of conversions produced by the two, the bloody rebellion and its aftershocks across the two islands prompted a general understanding that whatever Christian community was planted on St. Thomas, it needed to be an alternative witness to the perversions of Christianity and all other cultures that had pursued dominance through political power, coercion, terror, and destruction. The church that rose up from the shadows of the rebellion accepted that 'the overriding political task of the church is to be the community of the cross … that God, not nations, rule the world; that the boundaries of God's kingdom transcend those of Caesar; and that the main political task of the church is the formation of people who see clearly the cost of discipleship and are willing to pay the price' (Hauerwas & Pinches, 1997: 46-48).

To that end, Dober and Nitschmann began their 'other-cultural' witness by providing for themselves in the early days and not submitting to any of the culture's exploitative systems for their own benefit. This was contrary practice to many other Europeans and free people of colour on the island. They baked their own bread, grew their own food, and did not rely for too long even on the comforts and provision of plantocracy families; not even their Christian hosts from other denominations who were sympathetic to their mission. They were aided from time to time by like-minded individuals such as Mr. and Mrs. Johann Lorenz Carstens of the plantation on Mosquito Bay. The Carstens are named in Oldendorp's records as lending finances or housing to the mission, often manumitting the enslaved on his property and hiring them as employees. Since Mr.

Carstens was a member of the West India Company that propagated the slave trade, he often served as the mission's 'inside man.' He was considered an asset in times of great suspicion and unease among cultures.

Though sometimes annoyed by the missionaries' efforts to proselytise him, Mr Carstens was in favour of the conversion of the Africans and sought to thwart the efforts of several 'evil-minded persons' who attempted to suppress the work of the mission (Oldendorp 1987:315). Knowingly or unknowingly, the mission had begun to move in a stealth fashion akin to Old Testament Israel and also in New Testament and early church life, such as the twelve spies sent to gather to gather information on Canaan land,[3] the two sent to Jericho by Joshua,[4] and the five sent to Laish to gather information as the tribe of Dan migrated to the northern region.[5]

The missionaries' hope was to move in with an African on the island to assist them in everyday tasks including cultivation, but with the cultural crackdowns and watchful eyes raised by the rebellion, there was no African who would allow such an arrangement for fear of the plantocracy's negative reaction (Oldendorp 1987: 285-286). After several bouts for both brothers with near-fatal illnesses, Nitschmann decided to return to his family in Europe. He left all his earnings behind for Dober to continue the difficult work of discipleship, training, and shepherding - alone. Dober sent a humble plea with Nitschmann to carry to the congregation back at Herrnhut, an epistle that captures both his fear and his resolve:

> When I consider the entire road along which the Lord has led me, I must say that I am far from being true enough to the Father; for he uplifts and carries forth the small number of his chosen. And likewise, it has already been shown and proven that it is He who has sent us, even though not many are obedient to the gospel. I ask you, most beloved brethren, to remember me and to help me in the struggle to promote the gospel and my calling, which I have undertaken because of our Savior that I may be steadfast in my work and that the Lord may open the hearts of men. For I believe that with the help of your prayers and by the grace of our Savior, I will not bring disgrace to my aspirations. (Oldendorp, 1987: 287)

Alone now and awaiting the arrival of Nitschmann's replacement in ministry and life, Dober eventually found work as a steward for the island's governor. While providential in that he could continue his ministry work outside of his duties in the governor's household, working for the elite was a far cry from his initial desire to 'become a slave in the system.' By that time, Dober had only three disciples he could count; Anna, Anton Ulrich's sister and Abraham, who were initially zealous about their conversions,

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[3] Numbers 13-14; Deut 1:19-46.
[4] Joshua 2.
[5] Judges 18.

and Gerd - Anna's husband, who struggled mightily with taking part in the sinful festivities of the island's debauched festival that occurred on their holidays. In 1733, Dober fell gravely ill once again and was bedridden the entire following year but continued to minister to his African friends from his sickbed.

Nitschmann continued to minister for the St. Thomas cause as he travelled back to Herrnhut. On his stop in Copenhagen, he learned that the support for their mission had grown exponentially and had even been embraced by none other than Chamberlain von Pless - the fleet's commander who had initially declined their passage to the New World as slaves and prohibited them from boarding any ship with the West India Company. Nitschmann received an audience with Princess Sophia Hedwig, who provocatively suggested that the slaves would be more amenable to conversion if their emancipation was assured, thus raising an ethical conundrum with which all Christian denominations were wrestling at the time. Nitchsmann explained that this might produce false converts for the sake of personal freedom, and so it was better not to hitch the two together lest they see 'many hypocrites but few righteous Christians,' particularly without the assurance that the plantocracy would agree to or enforce conversion-based emancipation. Their conversation concluded without marrying the two concepts culturally or legislatively.

On St. Thomas meanwhile, the three fledgling African converts showed spiritual growth in fits and starts. Abraham and his sister Anna Ulrich drew closer to the Lord and desired holiness, while Anna's husband Gerd was drawn to the revelry and debauchery characteristic of island life. This, as well as her desire for her children to know her Saviour, resulted in domestic difficulties between husband and wife. Despite the strength and bravery she and her brother showed initially, their commitment to new life in Christ waned and flagged throughout the year until all three disciples deteriorated spiritually, relationally, and personally. This resulted in disunity between the three, and also between them and Dober who was often distracted by his duties serving the island's governor. He fell gravely ill yet again at the end of 1733 and into early 1734, and they attended to him in various states is doubt. Dober continued to minister from his sickbed. Once he was well enough to attend to his duties for the governor once again, he promptly quit the governor's employ and subsisted on bread and water so that he could spend more time with Anna, Gerd, and Abraham, who reaffirmed their commitment to new life in the Saviour. Soon enough, by April 1734, a second wave of twelve missionaries arrived to relieve him after their own unfruitful mission work on St. Croix.

Dober tearfully departed the work in November 1734, having been recalled to Herrnhut via Copenhagen to replace an elder who had died suddenly. As Oldendorp says of Dober's tenure on St. Thomas,

> …thus ended the almost two-year-long efforts of this faithful servant of Jesus Christ to acquaint the Negroes on St. Thomas with their Savior. He had declared at the outset that he would be satisfied if he could win but one soul of the Savior. Presently, he left behind four Negroes on whom the gospel had demonstrated its divine power, leaving them bound together with one another in love. (Oldendorp 1987: 298).

Dober multiplied his faith four times his initial prayer, and passed its kingdom ethos to those who would carry the flames of Count von Zinzendorf's two grand pillars of the Philadelphian Ideals: *Catholick Love and Apostolick Faith.*[6] To recount the community's ideals that distinguished them from other denominations, there was a focus on rediscovering the simplicity and sacrifice of the New Testament Church coupled with a pious desire that ethics and epistemology matched, individually and communally. At the same time, denominationally proscribed doctrine was deemphasized to avoid divisions, and an emphasis on the universal or invisible church was raised. The community concerned itself with evidence of an awakening to the purpose and life of Christ, an awakening that would produce a genuinely transformed life away from destruction and toward obedience that produced life for self and others. There was intense focus on the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Practically, they promoted in-home worship that featured raising of lay leadership, and lastly, the community strongly emphasised a commitment to non-separatism from previous denominations; that is, if one felt led to join the new community, it was not required to leave the institutional church; this impulse was borne out of Zinzendorf's affirmation of the historical persistence of the true Church universal, that while religious institutions could become corrupted by rebellion, individuals within them could still remain in a state of faithfulness.

2.4   The 2nd Wave Prepares

The second wave of mission effort saw the now departed Nitschmann replaced with the original partner, Tobias Leopold. Joining him were 26 additional missionaries sent on passage by sea from two directions: a struggling mission on St. Croix, and from Herrnhut Brethren headquarters in Germany. Most were artisans skilled in masonry, carpentry,

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[6] See Zinzendorf's Philadelphian Ideals as marks of Christian community and salvation, Chapter 1, p 35.

metallurgy, and tailoring. Their task, in addition to ministering salvation to the island's enslaved and free population, was to also cultivate several of six plantation sites on St. Croix that had been purchased by the Danish Privy Councillor. From the world's perspective, and from the perspective of the Herrnhuters, this made the missionaries colonists (or in our contemporary view, 'colonisers,' with all the accompanying negative associations of the exploitation associated with empire building). Oldendorp doesn't record their motivation for St. Thomas in adding this task to their efforts at kingdom advancement, so history is left to judge their plantation cultivation either as a stealth operation, as a matter of practicality, or perhaps an unwise entrepreneurial move.

Oldendorp observed that, at least for St. Croix, 'This was not the first time the Brethren had considered the idea of becoming plantation owners. It had already been occasioned in the past by various events. However, it was now combined with the more important purpose of spreading the word of the Gospel, an undertaking that might be most conveniently advanced by colonisation' (Oldendorp 1987: 292). Zinzendorf had concerns that overseeing a plantation operation might overtake their focus and cause a drift in kingdom work, so he ensured their commitment by having them swear an oath to the Brethrens' mission.

According to Oldendorp's records, during the years of the first missionary wave Dober and the other German workers were able to minister to any African pre-converts they described as 'awakened … and troubled about their salvation' (Oldendorp 1987: 297). The missionaries were teaching twice daily when Dober was suddenly recalled to Herrnhut. The interruption of Dober's work caused deep dismay and sadness among the many African friends and converts; at least four Africans are named under their discipleship: Gerd, Heinrich, and notably Abraham and Anna, Anton Ulrich's brother and sister whose discipleship had sparked the missionary efforts in the first place.

At the time of Dober's recall, all four 'testified repeatedly and joyfully that they wanted nothing more than to be with the Saviour and that their only goal was to become always more obedient and faithful to him' (Oldendorp 1987: 297). With prayers and tears, the community sent Dober back to Herrnhut in February of 1735, two years after he and Nitschmann had first landed on the shores of the Caribbean.

Meanwhile, on the island of St. Croix, the stark reality remained of the difficulty of the work on hard and environmentally hostile ground. Though the work on St. Croix quickly diminished, one convert among them survived and, like Matthäus Freundlich, became significant to the work on St Thomas when it was finally rekindled. That sole

survivor was a baptised Creole African named Mingo, a skilled travelling musician who provided music for the worship services. After several years during the second missionary wave, he would grow into a significant leader and 'redeemed helper' for the movement on St. Thomas (Oldendorp 1987:302).

For the moment however, as the post at St. Croix was abandoned, the lights also dimmed on the tiny St. Thomas community. The remaining African saints prayed for several months, waiting for God to move.

2.5   The 2ⁿᵈ Wave: Pastor Friedrich Martin

In 1736, the work on St. Thomas was taken up again by Pastor Friedrich Martin. Oldendorp records Martin's excellent pastoral qualifications and character describing him as a decisive, steadfast, cordial man with a benevolent nature in material need with genuine concern for a person's salvation and filled with an intense love for all mankind. Martin pursued anyone interested in the life of Christ with a discerning doggedness, and was particularly effective at what is known colloquially today as 'mercy ministry:'

> He shared his bread with the hungry and divided his own meager provisions with the needy, regardless of whether they were believers or still unbelievers. During the family that plagued the islands in the months of November and December 1736, he encountered two half-starved Negroes on the company plantation who were nearly at death's door. He sent them a loaf of bread and some flour, and this saved their lives. The crippled and the lame and other unfortunates, who had no means of earning a living, crawled to his door and found him to be an ever-ready benefactor (Oldendorp 1987: 319).

Martin practiced a biblical anthropology in the island's racialised, class-oriented cultural climate. He 'shook hands with the enslaved in the manner of good friends and sat down and conversed with them, as if they were his equals' (Oldendorp 1987: 319), which they were. During the Moravians ' persecution years on the island, Martin became a stabilising figure of renewal for the community. Martin is described as weak-bodied, but with a fiery spirit and sound common sense (Oldendorp 1987: 307). He possessed sound, nearly Pauline qualities and typically kept a level head when the community faced persecution. Martin could effectively apply Scripture to culture, providing a voice that ranged from gently corrective to threatening, when appropriate. He shared the pastoral and evangelistic compassion of Paul, and like Paul, his health was a perpetual thorn in the side that regulated any tendency toward self-reliance. All of these were sustaining qualities in this difficult work. The earliest outbursts against his work were levelled against him by the island's Africans, and by his own admission made him stronger both in body and in faith (Oldendorp 1987: 310). It was understood by the diarist that:

[Martin] viewed St. Thomas as the field of endeavour allotted to him by the Savior and the cultivation of that field as his personal duty. He was not content to spread the seeds of God's word only among the neighboring Negroes, but rather he travelled around the island and attracted a great deal of attention among the Negroes on many other plantations through the teachings of Jesus. Those who had heard him told others about it, with the result that the fire that he kindled in such a short time spread rapidly over the entire island. (Oldendorp 197: 309).

Within Martin's first year at St. Thomas, an African congregant, Clas built the community's first meeting and worship house that would become their church. Later, their own plantation would be established close to the meeting house where the enslaved could find meaningful work, safety, and protection against family members being sold off the island which kept their families intact. One of the sweeter remembrances of these early days is of Clas reading aloud the Gospel of John to a group of enslaved Africans, made even sweeter that the reading was done in the church house that Clas had built with his own hands. Still, in a 2017 interview with Yvonne Francis (a descendant of the original population and curator of the St. Thomas Moravian's history) was revealing. Ms. Francis spoke with pride as she led me on a tour of the plantation and surviving church buildings. She declared of their ownership and entry into the plantation system, 'We felt good … we had something of our own' (Francis, 2019). Her opinions regarding the plantation ownership amid the slaving system add to her understanding of the spiritual, Kingdom-building intent behind everything for which her ancestors are remembered.

2.5.1   The Philadelphia Ideals Bring Indictment

On the fragile foundation laid by the first wave of missionaries, Pastor Martin contextualised the Moravians' Philadelphian Ideals and developed the community's own other-political and other-cultural views. Such adjustments were necessary considering that Nitschmann and Leopold had overlooked St. Thomas' unique and complex context. The leadership that developed under Martin's shepherding opened more opportunities to create a viable alternative witness by seeing beyond the moralism of the first wave of missions. Against the backdrop of the Moravian slave and race debates, the community encouraged interracial marriages, 'illegal' baptisms, African leadership, and placement of women in evangelistic and leadership positions (at least twice, women offered emergency pulpit supply in preaching roles when their hostile environment prevented the men were from doing so).

Some of the plantocracy noted the character of this community. It was certainly peculiar among the other cultures on the island, and even abroad amongst their own

denominational standards. The island's plantocracy not only felt that converted Africans' piety judged their own loose morals, they also felt that the progression of the Moravian's mission work and conversion to spiritual freedom and ontological equality would destabilise the island's social structure. All the island's cultures - traditional African, plantocracy, and other denominations on the island began overt and covert ways of discouraging enslaved Africans from consorting with the Moravian missionaries. Those who held political and ecclesial power sought to slander the missionaries unjustly in the court of public opinion. Despite this opposition, the number of eager students seeking salvation grew as the news of their teaching of spiritual freedom and ontological dignity spread. The rest of their narrative points out the specific ways in which the hostility and resentment of their neighbours grew resulting in extra-judicial tortures, dismemberments, confiscation of Bibles and devotional materials, unjust imprisonment, harassment and discrimination (Oldendorp 1987: 309). Yet, as it was in the Book of Acts and New Testament epistles, their persecution provided the soil for the Gospel strength to multiply, despite the risks of identifying with this peculiar community.

To grasp the continuity between these Abel-like communities and the New Testament church, it's helpful to once again revisit Paul's counsel to the dispersed church at Galatia and return to the discussion begun at the end of chapter one of this thesis. Paul offers a prescription for perseverance at the end of chapter six of Galatians. He reminds the early community that the seedbed of well-doing, where our thoughts are refined, tested, and tried, lies in the community of Christ. As members of Christ's indivisible body, we are to bear one another's burdens and prefer and prioritise the household of faith, because the household of faith's tendency towards the rebellion of Cain requires continual reprioritisation (or renewal) toward Abel-like obedience to maintain its faithful witness. Thus, Paul advises that when caught in transgressions or disobedience (Cain), the community is responsible for encouraging restoration (Galatians 6:1a). They are likewise exhorted to keep watch on themselves, 'lest they be tempted' (Galatians 6:1b). Discipling and providing for those in the household of faith with the continual reminder of whose story they are following; the one that leads to life of the one that leads to destruction, remain bedrock for persevering communities. With obedience to Christ, identity and community in Christ will lead to perseverance and endurance in Christ. For Paul and the early Galatians and the St. Thomas Moravians, an understanding of God's people made

through Christ's first breath to our fulfilment in Him, was regarded as key to their endurance.

Seasons of expansion and contraction in community growth is a New Testament phenomenon. Expansion due to the community's willingness to suffer for bearing the name of Christ and living after his pattern of life, death and resurrection, creates a hostility that produces more curiosity around the community and their motivations, which in turn produces more converts, which produces more hostility, and so on. Once inside the community, the newly awakened convert finds himself on the receiving end of the apathy and hostility that he once doled out; as the narrative unfolds, some falter from the community because they are not true converts, while others falter because the life of Christ and the alternative witness are costly - even within an already difficult social structure. The net effect is a biblical cycle of endurance: A distinct community enters the social structure, and external hostility and pressure rise against it. That hostility, in turn, produces an endurance that yields curiosity from outside of the community. This curiosity, fanned into flame by the Holy Spirit, yields more community members willing to endure hardship for their identity in Christ. In the three accounts of his conversion from hostility to embrace, Paul's narrative reports that the root cause of doxological endurance is the peaceful transition that comes through our justification in Christ initiated through God's grace (Acts 9, Acts 22, Acts 26).

As this thesis continues highlighting the Moravians' individual and communal endurance, echoes of Acts and the epistle to the Galatian church carry across the island's Caribbean sands; the Cain and Abel dynamic unfolds to an even fuller display than what had been seen by Nitschmann, Dober, and Leopold in the mission's early days.

The St Thomas narrative continues in the sections following, highlighting the contributions of the island's Moravian women of African descent, and then I detail the entire community's doxological responses to persecution and hostility, affirming Sensbach's rendering of the community as a 'Black Book of Acts.'

2.6   Magdalena as a Cornelius Figure (Acts 10)

Among the notable workers who were essential to the mission effort were two women of African descent, Magdalena[7] and Rebekka. Both women showed a level of

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[7] Magdalena appears by several names. Oldendorp and other historians note that her name changes typically accompanied shifts in her religious bearings. Her West African birth name on the island of Popa (or Papaa) was Dama. After her emancipation, she was known as Marotta, and on her conversion to Protestantism

commitment to their faith and the faith community with a boldness that comes from Gospel empowerment.

Recall from chapter one that the Moravian 'church-mother' and women's shepherd Magdalena was born as Dama in the late 1650s in Great Popo Africa (pp 19-31). I began the narrative with Magdalena in her West African homeland due to her significance as firstborn in the community's chronology. Of similar import is her conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism, in her experience moving from highborn social status to lowborn through the slave trade, and also in cultural irony as one who was likely sold into slavery by Africans like her. I now reintroduce Magdalena, noting that she likely interfaced often with the Moravians as the community developed. The region of West Africa where Magdalena was born was known as 'the trading and political centre of the Popo Kingdom in the western section of the Bight of Benin. It boasted a densely populated commercial and urban landscape.'

Due to the early activities of Catholics in Benin's western bay, upper and lower coastal towns in Lower and Upper Guinea had several small Catholic congregations. Recall also that Magdalena's father was Roman Catholic who taught her basic Catholic doctrine, the reading and writing of her own language Aja-Ayizo, and some Portuguese (Mancke and Shammas, 2015:115-117). It's possible that fellow Africans sold her into slavery, and possibly by early versions of the Dahomey warriors. These were most noted as ruthless female fighters who built wealth for their male king by participating as slave catchers in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.[8] After many years of enslavement on St. Thomas, she was manumitted due to advancing age by Mr. Carstens, the stealth patron of the movement who was also a member of the plantocracy. Carstens remained highly sympathetic to the Moravian mission, serving as the movement's inside man among the hostile.[9]

The Moravian theologian August Spangenberg, who was supportive of the St. Thomas work from its earliest days, was himself an oft-persecuted and frequent visitor

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among the Moravians, she took the name Magdalena after the reigning Danish–Norwegian Queen, Sophia Magdalene. I have chosen to use her final Christian self-chosen name of Magdalena.

[8] The fierce and feared Dahomey warriors would have emerged in various forms under the ruler Wegbaja (1645-85) and continued under his successor in Akaba (1685-1708).

[9] Mr Carstens and his wife often appear in Oldendorp's records as lending finances or housing to the mission, manumitting the enslaved on his property and rehiring them as employees. Since he was a member of the West India Company that propagated the slave trade, he often served as the mission's 'inside man.' He was very much in favour of the conversion of the Africans, and sought to thwart the efforts of several 'evil-minded persons' who attempted to suppress the work of the mission (Oldendorp 1987:315).

to the band of beleaguered Christians. He drew parallels between Magdalena's character and the New Testament saints mentioned in the Book of Acts. These character elements were evident even before her conversion, which helped the community believe she was ripe to hear the Moravians' presentation of the Gospel of Christ. To restate from chapter one:

> She is a woman similar to Cornelius in the *Acts of the Apostles (Acts 10)*. She fears God and acts righteously. Before she eats anything at all in the morning, she falls on her knees, lowers her face to the earth, and prays. Before she goes to sleep, she does the same thing, manifesting a great and extraordinary respect before God. She said that she had learned these practices from her parents and that others in her land served the Lord in a similar manner. She stated however, that the people in Guinea who live along the coast knew nothing of these things. She could not understand why the Whites showed such little respect before God and seemed only to be paying him compliments. She said that until someone showed her a better way, she would persist in her practices in order that God might not become angry with her. We advised her to continue with these practices, to pray even more ardently – indeed to pray all the time – and not to become lax in these matters … We asked her if she would like to hear something about Christ the Son of God, who had come into the world for our good. 'Oh yes,' she said… (Oldendorp 1987: 313).

The African and European Moravians approached Magdalena much like Phillip approached the Ethiopian Eunuch, or perhaps as Priscilla and Aquila approached Apollos, with hands and hearts of correction that would guide her into a biblically coherent understanding of God and the ancient story. Ray A. Kea questions whether hers was a 'conversion' to an understanding of a European configuration of God as the European missionaries would have considered it, or if it was an Africanisation of a form of Christianity she had laced together from religious experiences throughout her lifetime (Mancke and Shammas, 2015:115-117).

After examining Magdalena's courageous conversion, I argued in chapter one that there was strong evidence of an identity and priority shift. This point of conversion can be argued from the Moravians' detailed notes on her belief systems before and after, but also from her willingness to enter a beleaguered community that suffered for their beliefs and lifestyle when there were other communal options available to her on St. Thomas Island. She could have found community among the emancipated, among the kind-hearted Carstens, and the free people of colour. Moreover, with a father well versed in Catholic doctrine and less than a hundred years after the Protestant Reformation, Magdalena might have understood the differences between Catholic teachings of Christ's sacrifice and Protestantism. It is difficult to speculate whether any person's conversion is 'genuine,' or how 'genuine' should be defined. For the Moravian community, 'genuine conversion' certainly involved the same elements as the earliest Christians

in the book of Acts: putting down one way of life and its associated behaviours that led to spiritual and physical destruction, observing the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper that Christ instituted, and taking up the story of death, resurrection, and eventual glorification; the same life led by Christ as the first among many.

Martin emphasised the mission in various venues and opportunities: encourage Africans, free people of colour, and plantocracy alike to 'achieve a living knowledge of Jesus Christ and find peace for their souls in him.' (Oldendorp 1987: 325). What is clear of Magdalena is that she traded one story for another, and the one she willingly chose was not the easier road. Kea himself admits 'the new faith defied established authority, infused the slaves with ideas of liberation, and was a nursery of revolt. The new converts were attacked and beaten, their books burned, and church services disrupted' (Mancke and Shammas, 2015:115-117, 128).

Magdalena was instrumental as a mature figure in the church during this period, earning all respect from the Moravian congregation for her commitment to discipleship, evangelism, and mission. She felt it was 'quite important to her that God should send people across the sea to bring the word of life to poor Negroes. Therefore, she encouraged her people in a motherly fashion to give heed to them' (Oldendorp 1987: 313). Having been manumitted from work on the Carstens plantation, she hosted those still enslaved and enjoined them in prayer on every occasion. She helped bring others under the Carstens' ownership to a deeper understanding of the things of God, and into the Moravian community. Mingo and Andreas were two baptised Negroes from the Carstens plantation who were the fruit of her efforts, Once converted and baptised, they quickly gained 'practical knowledge of the power and growth in their understanding of Jesus Christ.' They too would be shepherded, disciplined, and groomed into leadership over the Moravian community during its persecution years, and would oversee the work long after. In these years of great hostility toward the church, during which Friedrich Martin, Magdalena and the Freundlichs were the main leaders, 'the number of eager learners was so great that there wasn't room for them all at the regular evening meetings held in the Brethrens' dwelling' (Oldendorp 1987: 314-315).

Chapter one detailed how the African and European Moravians approached Magdalena's faith and conversion much like Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, or perhaps as Priscilla and Aquila approached Apollos: with hands and hearts of correction that would guide her into a biblically coherent understanding of God, his story, and

her place within it (pp 19-32). Hers had been a long journey to a Protestant understanding of the Bible's story, traversing geography, doctrine, religions, cultures, languages, and personal experiences. In 1736, when Magdalena professed a Protestant Christology and a clear understanding of basic doctrine and the character of the Trinity, the Brethren mission had been established on the island for nearly four years. She joined the community as an elderly woman who had been on the island for generations.

When Magdalena joined the Moravians and their work, she brought wisdom, life experience and a great facility with languages to the community. By the time of her manumission, she was literate in her own West African tongue, Portuguese, and in the lingua franca in the Danish Caribbean islands, Dutch Creole. Magdalena's linguistic and literary gifts shone most deeply at the community's greatest moment of persecution. 1737 and 1738 saw the height of the community's religious oppression. With their Sunday School materials confiscated and much of their leadership jailed due to false accusations from surrounding church leaders, Magdalena wrote directly to the Danish-Norwegian Queen Sophia Magdalene. She appealed to the sovereign for their freedom from unjust imprisonment, and for the return of their materials. Magdalena penned several letters on behalf of the community to the Crown, but her personal letter is incredibly pointed for a woman of no means or social standing. In a direct appeal to Sophie Magdalene, the Sovereign Queen of her nation, she wrote:

> Great Queen! At the time when I lived in Poppo, in Africa [*ad ga Tome*], I served the Lord Mau [*bruhu mau*]. Now I have come into the land of the Whites [*voltomé*], and they will not allow me to serve the Lord Jesus. Previously, I did not have any reason to serve him, but now I do. I am very sad in my heart that the Black women on St. Thomas are not allowed to serve the Lord Jesus. The Whites do not want to obey him. Let them do as they wish. But when the poor black brethren and sisters want to serve the Lord Jesus, they are looked upon as maroons. If the Queen [*Neacanda*] thinks it fitting, please pray to the Lord Jesus for us and let her intercede with the King to allow Baas Martin to preach the Lord's word, so that we can come to know the Lord and so that he can baptize us Blacks in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. May the Lord save you and bless you, along with your son and daughter and your whole family. I will pray to the Lord Jesus for you. In the name of over 250 black women, who love Lord Jesus, written by Marotta, now Magdalena of Poppo in Africa (Mancke and Shammas, 2015: 132-133).

Her letter was delivered by hand through the community's patron, Count von Zinzendorf. In Denmark, he passed it to David Nitschmann (of the first missionary wave), now installed as a church bishop. Her letter was delivered directly to Queen Sophie Magdalene, and certainly contributed to the social pressure to grant them the proper justice and religious freedoms they were denied by their local magistrates. Such empowerment and boldness for society's lowest social class is noteworthy. The elevation and empowerment of Africans and the poor, particularly African women, served as an 'other-cultural witness,' just as it did in the New Testament with the regard and

mention of numerous women. The community's treatment of women was Christ-like, stands out in relief against a culture of marginalisation with stories of the empowerment of Mary the mother of Jesus, Priscilla, Lydia, Mary and Martha, Mary Magdalene, the woman with the issue of blood, the Samaritan woman at the well, and others who were relegated to the shadows of the Roman Empire. A woman held very little sway on matters political or civil, yet the Bible's high esteem for women and girls is recorded throughout its narrative. Indeed, many accounts in the Gospels tell us that Christ's constant consideration of women was radical indeed for its day. His high view of women is perhaps best displayed and recorded in Luke 24, in the first witness of his resurrection and victory over hell, death and the grave; his greatest triumph was first revealed to a group of women (Luke 24:1-12).

Magdalena's elevation, and her empowerment to stand for her community's religious freedom, echoes the commissioning of the women gathered at Christ's empty tomb. Society's lowest was entrusted with the first knowledge of the risen Saviour, an affirmation of God's high estimation of the word, witness and worth of a woman (Mark 16:1-8, Matthew 28:1-10). Such acts reveal that there is one sole Person who could first assess, and then restore a woman's social worth properly as beings who bear the very image of God, that is the Creator of that image: Christ himself (Genesis 1:26-31, Colossians 1:13-17).[10] The women at Christ's tomb were divinely commissioned to tell his disciples that he had risen, and the news of Hope for all humanity began to spread. 'Go, tell the others what you have seen….' meant they were charged with bearing and delivering a life-altering message. In the Gospels, this was an alternative witness for women in a Cainian environment of death and social repression; so it was for Magdalena.

A similar impact of conversion and obedience unto empowerment and endurance comes through a younger saint in the Moravian community, Rebekka, the now emancipated saint formerly known as Shelly.

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[10] 'He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities*—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.' Colossians 1:13-17.

2.7   The Cost of Discipleship: Rebekka Freundlich

Rebekka, a self-emancipated, free woman of colour, was likewise central to the mission movement. Formerly named Shelley, Rebekka bore a distinctly peaceful witness to the violence borne by the island's competing false narratives. Rebekka was an 'octoroon'[11] kidnapped from the neighbouring Caribbean Island of 'Antigo' as a child of six or seven,[12] and brought to St. Thomas and sold to a 'family of high standing' where she became literate by reading through the Bible (Oldendorp 1987: 314). According to the mid-twentieth century St. Thomas historian Albert A. Campbell, 'Christianity was introduced among the St. Thomas Negroes at the beginning of the eighteenth century by Catholic priests who visited the island from the nearby Spanish colony of Porto [sic] Rico. They held services and baptised a few slaves, but their influence was negligible. Lutheran and Calvinist services were also held during this period but were for the white residents only' (Dashiell 1943: 10).

Around age fourteen, Rebekka was baptised by one such Roman Catholic priest who was baptising Africans on St. Thomas; it was this priest who changed her name from Shelly. Even as a child, she had a genuine desire to become a Christian, and at her request, he baptised her but left her with no Catholic community to speak of, nor was she catechized into any particular doctrine. Though she often an emptiness from rituals devoid of meaning or purpose, she nevertheless pointed the women in her household to Christ, hoping for a time when a teacher might come and 'point out the true path of salvation to her and others' (Oldendorp 1987: 314). Once emancipated, her social standing on the island was precarious since free people of colour were few, a marginalised community mostly located in one section of the island. The free people of colour were mistrusted by both the plantocracy and the traditional Africans.[13]

When she later learned of Friedrich Martin and his mission efforts among the island's Africans, she requested a visit that led to an even greater thirst for knowledge of

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[11] In the numerous racial typologies created by European adventurers to identify non-Caucasians, 'octoroon' status would indicate parentage and ancestry of one-eighth of African blood. How Rebekka knew herself to be of mixed parentage means she had some memory of at least one of her parents prior to her kidnap and sale.

[12] Modern-day Antigua.

[13] The small class of 'free people of colour,' who dangled between slavery and freedom, was small - 118 in 1775, and likely even smaller in 1720-30 or around the time of Rebekka's emancipation (Sensbach 2005: 40). The community lived, quarantined by law, in the all free-Black neighbourhood of Charlotte Amalie called the Free *Guts*.

the Word and Christian living. Upon her conversion to Protestantism, she developed a different standard for success in life on the island: pursuing religion, teaching, and holy living became her new measure for station in life (Sensbach 2005:45). She saw in Pastor Martin an opportunity to increase her spiritual and religious knowledge, and so she spent a great deal of time with Martin and the other missionaries. She was not alone in these pursuits, as women often reached out to the Moravian community with 'urgency and bravery.' August Spangenberg details how several women repeatedly implored the missionaries for instruction, even after being turned away to test their zeal and intentions. (Sensbach 2005: 59).

Rebekka studied the Scriptures, the Book of Acts in particular, and the martyrs' stories (Sensbach 2005: 59). From their earliest days, both Rebekka and Magdalena had been impressed with the martyrs' lives and the joy with which they embraced hardship, even unto death. At the heart of their studies, and in the community, lay an understanding that within the Book of Acts and among the Protestant martyrs, one could find a standard for a transformative Christianity that makes its adherents willing to suffer unto death for their Saviour. The extent to which their study of their spiritual and biblical ancestors impacted their ability to endure hardships of their own is uncharted and unmentioned, however, the priority of studying these saints as a standard is noteworthy.

Of Rebekka's character, it is said that she had a genuine love for the Saviour and contained a quiet self-assurance with an inclination to teach. She proved an excellent administrator and, drawing upon the Ethiopian eunuch for inspiration, was a diligent student of the Scriptures with a keen ability to reason through her own questions, and those of others (Sensbach 2005:54-55). Martin and the other missionaries soon saw her giftedness in teaching and thought she would be a powerful addition to the community to reach and minister to women in ways that they, as men, could not. Her employer, the Beverhout family, held to extreme racial, class, and social consciousness and preferred segregation between the races. Nevertheless, they allowed her to visit the Brethren often. Socially speaking, Rebekka's single status presented challenges for the missionaries. Travelling together as two men and a single woman meant they appeared to defy propriety. Their extended time spent together in study and training raised enough eyebrows to challenge the Moravians' piety not only among the 'heathen,' but also among the Moravians themselves back in Herrnhut as they were in the practice of gender-segregated worship services. Drawing wisdom from the epistles to 'let there

not be a hint of sexual sin among you'[14] and similar passages, Baas Martin brought Rebekka a possible solution by suggesting she marry their long-time mission companion, German pastor Matthäus Freundlich. After deep prayer and thoughtful consideration, Rebekka agreed. Both Matthäus and Rebekka felt the wisdom of their union, as well as the emotion of it; they also likely knew that their mixed-race union would invite problems in their heavily racially segregated island culture. Indeed, their union would become a focal point of the persecution that was to come in just a few short years.

The small community grew, with valuable contributions from Anna and Abraham (Anton Ulrich's siblings, Anna being the catalyst for the whole missionary endeavour). The earliest baptisms were a trio of exchanged lives and names: Immanuel became Andreas, Jost became Nathaniel, and Clas became Petrus. Mingo and Andreas, in the employ of the sympathetic Carsten family, joined them. Their numbers grew to roughly six-hundred by the end of the decade, with the German theologian Spangenberg and Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf, visiting the community frequently and at key times. More details of their lives will be shared in subsequent chapters as I discuss the meaning of baptism to this faithful community, and their understanding of the exchanged life - Christ's for ours and ours for Christ's - their voluntary conversions, and the persecution that followed them (Oldendorp 1987: 347).

2.8   Persecution and Unjust Imprisonment

The St. Thomas Moravians were no strangers to the typical persecutions and abuses that still mark the contemporary church today. Heightened life and death drama, unjust imprisonment, amputations for believers who defied the laws built against them, house and church burning, and confiscated Bible materials stand as examples of dramatic conflict that marked the St. Thomas community as a 'Black Book of Acts.' Matching Augustine's binary premise in a Cain and Abel pattern, a Cainian impulse seethed beneath the community's expansion and eventually erupted into aggression, resistance and violence that came from both inside and outside of the island's Christian community.

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[14] Ephesians 5:3.

Oldendorp captures the Cainian spirit by noting that 'there were among them evil-minded individuals who hated and ridiculed those of their fellow slaves who no longer wished to follow them on the road to perdition, but there were also various individuals among the whites who sought to hinder their progress and who might otherwise have been helpful in promoting a knowledge of Jesus Christ among their slaves, thereby bringing them blessings' (Oldendorp 1987:321). Of those who were hostile, the whip and scourge were employed for consorting with the missionaries and new converts to drive the curious away from their teachings. False accusations and character slander were common, bringing many Africans to court on trumped-up charges. Any books found that were associated with the missionaries were confiscated and burned, and the owner of the books was scourged. The missionaries themselves, including the theologian Spangenberg, risked public stoning. Spangenberg himself became a bigger target when he began translating their Bible materials into the common Dutch Creole language, ostensibly for literate enslaved and free people of colour and possibly also for poor whites. The opposition came from many directions but often stemmed from a single source: 'Many Whites believed that Blacks were a creation of the devil and were incapable of eternal salvation.' (Oldendorp 1987: 322).

There is clearly documented abuse toward the growing church. Violence, harassment, threats, and abuse came from the White planters, their overseers, and their traditional African neighbours. There is also a great deal of documented evidence of abuse from the institutional church, directed at this New Testament-style church movement. One pastor in particular, pastor Borm from the Reformed Church, played the role of Cain in their microstory within the larger story. Though the doings of the Brethren were not under his purview as a minister of the Reformed Church, Pastor Borm launched a legislative nightmare of false accusations against the missionaries, starting with the validity of Pastor Martin's ordination. Kea provides some perspective that helps us understand why Borm began his campaign against the St. Thomas Moravian leadership; Borm believed the missionaries planted 'liberation' in the heads of the enslaved, challenging the class and racial hierarchies that made up the island's foundation. However, had Borm investigated he would have known that from early on, the Moravian mission had deemphasised any connection between baptism/conversion and emancipation, out of concern for 'genuine' conversions rather than conversions as a path to emancipation. This was an echo of Luther's teaching from the Reformation that a person

should remain in the same social condition as when he was called to Christ.

The first conversation of connecting conversion to emancipation had already arisen through the Royal Princess Sophie Hedwig; first-wave missionary Nitschmann clarified that 'such an approach would result in the creation of many hypocrites but few righteous Christians.' Nitschmann argued that enslaved Africans might take on the appearance of being Christian 'without any true transformation of the heart' (Oldendorp 1987: 287). Indeed, in teaching that seems unfortunate today but was typical of their time, the Moravians held that:

> ... the religion of our Savior, Jesus Christ, indicates to Christian slaves their duties toward their masters very clearly, very specifically, and very completely. It advises those duties on the basis of reasons which are independent of the character of the master and his harsh or kindly treatment of his slaves. Christianity makes it a duty to the slaves to serve their masters with the same faithfulness and humbleness with which they feel themselves obliged to serve Christ, their Savior (Dashiell 1947: 10).

Had the plantocracy and the missionaries engaged the Africans more deeply, they would have known that conversions, particularly deathbed conversions, were not motivated by manumission since the enslaved still converted with no social payoff; emancipation was likely not a priority or a motivating factor for most when it came to conversion. This is not to say that manumission was not on the minds of the enslaved Moravian Christian; Oldendorp's records show many accounts of congregants and leaders as having self-emancipated or were manumitted by their owners for reasons of health of advanced age and living as free people on the island. It's only to say that most did not seem to conflate their conversion with their quest for manumission.

Challenging Martin's ordination accomplished several things for Borm that could halt the mission completely: first, it questioned Martin's authority to baptise African congregants, and to serve the Lord's supper. These were services limited to ordained clergy. Secondly, it called into question his authority to start a Christian community on the island. Finally, it called into question the legitimacy of any marriages performed, especially the Freundlichs. An unauthorised marriage would put them in the position of living together out of wedlock and causing a public nuisance, the penalties for which were high. Recalling that many Reformed on the island reserved Christianity for whites only, a variety of motivations spring to mind behind Borm's efforts to undermine the one thing central to the mission's advances, on which everything hinged: the legitimacy of Martin's ordination.

Borm filed charges against the Moravians with the local governor, challenging not only the legitimacy of Martin's ordination, but also his authority to perform sacraments, the legitimacy of all African Moravian baptisms, and the legitimacy of the Freundlich's marriage. The issue boiled down to one of religious freedom; through the Royal Concession of 1733, the elders at Herrnhut had secured from the Crown all the necessary permissions for the original missionaries, Dober, Nitschmann and Leopold, to conduct baptisms, sacraments, teach, preach, and plant a church. The community at Herrnhut assumed that these permissions extended to the whole mission; Borm questioned whether this was the case. If the Herrnhuters had not secured the proper competence from the Crown, or if any hint of fraud, heresy, or unbiblical teaching was found, the Herrnhuters could be fully prosecuted according to the king's law (Oldendorp 1987: 343).

Martin's teachings were biblically sound, if not socially typical. In April 1738, one month before Rebekka and Matthäus were wed, a general teaching regarding the institution of marriage was given on the Christian practice among believers. That teaching included a meditation on the biblical meaning of 'wedlock' and that it was a God-established institution based in the creation story of Genesis. Moreover, drawing on the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, Baas Martin stressed that Christ had lived and died as a man so that all believing couples could find the necessary grace, strength, and light to properly live the institution. He also stressed that matrimony was to be a communal event, done in the presence of witnesses and with the blessing of the whole Christian community and their promise of support. Such a communal ceremony should involve prayer, singing and blessings (Oldendorp 1987: 333-334).

This teaching was a joy to the African congregants, who lived in the shadow of being sold and marriages separated. The teaching was also an indictment to White planters who held African marriages in low regard. The false narrative that rejected the union of man and woman (in Genesis as a promised blessing, made possible by the life and incarnation of Christ) was no doubt prompted by the painful splitting of two marriages due to the sale of two Christian helpers to pay off debts, Andreas and his brother Johannes. With the stroke of a pen and a handshake, two families were destroyed; two husbands and two fathers, ripped from their families and sent to the neighbouring island of St. John in place of cash. The purchase of the Posaunenberg plantation may also have been an effort to honour the sanctity of marriage, and to keep families together as congregants served under the heavy yoke of the slaving system.

Nevertheless, Borm directly challenged Martin's credibility and the Freundlich's marriage. Around the same time, in late 1738's aftermath of a large hurricane that caused much damage and chaos on the island, an apostate from the faith and the Moravian community named Timotheus Fiedler caused similar spiritual and communal damage. Fiedler was once Pastor Martin's helper on the island of St. Croix. Fiedler, who was no longer considered a Christian or a part of the Brethren movement due to his life of dissipation, was charged with theft from Chamberlain von Pless' treasure chest in the aftermath of the storm. While asserting his innocence to the authorities, Fiedler either intentionally or unintentionally implicated the Freundlichs as accomplices in the theft. These accusations, along with Borm's charges that their marriage was invalid, led to their arrest along with Pastor Martin. The Lord Jesus Christ had his Judas, the Apostle Paul had Demas and Alexander,[15] and Martin now had Fiedler.

The Africans in the congregation, which numbered four to five hundred persons at this point, met to determine who would continue the work with Martin and the Freundlichs in prison. Ninety Africans assembled at Posaunenberg plantation to determine how to continue God's work in their absence, whether temporary or permanent. The congregation elected from their ranks several elders to serve as general and special ministers: Zacharias, Abraham, Christoph, and seven others to serve as special ministers. They were hastily consecrated to their office by Pastor Martin.

Before the leaders were taken to the fort's prison, they baptised ten Africans who had ardently begged to be baptised before the incarceration. Pastor Martin thought this might be the last time he could perform the sacrament, which was attended by over two hundred African neighbours, Christian families, and friends. Oldendorp interprets this as an encouragement to Martin and the Freundlichs that their ministry still bore kingdom fruit. The ten candidates declared their love of the Saviour, that He 'transcended everything else in their lives, that they would place their complete trust in him, and that they were willing to undergo any kind of suffering in order to remain faithful to him' (Oldendorp 1987: 347). The baptismal ceremony ended in what Oldendorp recalls as 'the ardent prayers of the congregation' that lasted into the wee hours of the morning.

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[15] Scripture tells of Alexander, once a professing believer under the Apostle Paul's care, who turned to false teachings. After an open rebuke from the Apostle Paul, he became violent toward Paul and the Christian community, setting them up to be abused by the Roman authorities. Paul's response was to leave it to the Lord to avenge. *cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5, 1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 4:14.*

Like Paul and Silas in their own jail cell,[16] prayer and song marked their time in prison on false charges of 'theft and failure to pay penalties of refusal to perform court appointed duties based on the admission of their guilt.' They could not take court-ordered oaths for reasons of conscience, to swear neither *by heaven nor earth*.[17] 'Even in these circumstances, they proved themselves to be servants of Jesus Christ, by enduring their predicament with patience, steadfastness, prayer, and faith' (Oldendorp 1987: 347). The community had already weaponised prayer as an endurance tool in the early years before the court case. August Spangenberg, the missionary-theologian who was at the first arrival of the missionaries, returned from Mosquito Bay to Tappus with a severe case of fever and diarrhoea, which of late became so severe that there were growing doubts about his survival.

With tears in their eyes, many Negroes, including the three recently baptised men, gathered around his sickbed, and prayed to God with all their hearts for his recovery. God heard their prayers and restored his health' (Oldendorp 1987: 317). In the community's earliest days, this healing that was more typical of the first-century church caused a rapid spread of the gospel among the Africans, resulting in about two hundred eager for a closer understanding of God in Christ. Evening prayer and discipleship meetings were the highlight of the day, and many Africans travelled long distances through the dark of night to attend, despite having already worked a full day. The risk for these African saints moving about in the evenings cannot be overstated, particularly in large numbers. In 1672, the first official ordinance issued in St. Thomas contained the following provision:

> No man must let his negro leave the estate after sunset, without good cause, that he may not go to his neighbor's estate and do injury; and whoever at night observes a strange Negro on his estate shall catch him and carry him in the morning to the fort where he shall be punished (Dashiell, 1943: 6-7).

This ordinance was expanded, refined and restated in 1733, in light of the violent St. John's rebellion. With it, travel became even more tightly restricted, and punishments were made more severe. The new mandate read:

> The leaders of runaways should be pinched thrice with red-hot irons and then hanged. A Negro found guilty of conspiracy was to lose a leg, unless the owner requested the lightening of the sentence to one hundred fifty lashes and the loss of the Negro's ears. Slaves failing to report a plot of which they had knowledge were to be branded in the forehead and to receive one hundred lashes besides. Informers of Negro plots could secure cash premiums and have their names kept secret. Runaways caught within a week were to be punished with one hundred fifty lashes; those of three months standing were to lose a leg; if they remained away for six months, it would cost them their lives. Thievery, and assistance of thieves and runaways, were to be punished by whipping and branding. A Negro raising his hand against a white man must be pinched three times with a hot iron;

[16] Acts 16:16-40.
[17] Matthew 5:34-37.

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whether he should be hanged or merely lose a hand was left to the discretion of his accuser. The testimony of a reputable white man against a Negro ordinarily sufficed; in case of doubt the Negro might be submitted to torture. A Negro meeting a white man on the road was to stand aside until the latter had passed him. The carrying of sticks or knives, witchcraft among Negroes, attempts to poison, dances, feasts, and music, loitering in the village after drumbeat—all were provided against. Free Negroes implicated in runaway plots or found to have encouraged thievery were to be deprived of liberty and property, and after receiving a flogging, to be banished from the land. (Dashiell, 1943: 6-7).

According to Oldendorp's records, these laws remained in effect for many years; he found them virtually unchanged as late as 1767 (Dashiell, 1943: 6-7), twenty-seven years after the Moravians' era of extreme persecution. Yet the Moravians' most difficult time of hostility was also their greatest time of growth, living under similar risk as in the Book of Acts:

> The planters and merchants held undisputed control over their slaves just as they did over their other property. They could sell them as they chose, give them away, or pass them on in their wills. The slaves had no legal rights and could not give evidence in court. They were punished according to the discretion of the owner; Danish law denied him only the right of taking life. The slaves were strictly forbidden to carry weapons of any kind or to come together from the various plantations. None was allowed to leave the plantation of his master without express permission; *even those who wished to attend the church had to provide themselves with a written pass* (Dashiell, 1943: 6-7).

Such systems of terror were common and used against the church to deny religious freedom and freedom of assembly across the Americas, wherever the enslaved were found. They functioned much like the Africans meeting in the hush harbours of the American South, where such evening religious meetings were highly illegal - whether in the open air, homes, or cabins. It was in such secret gatherings that the American enslaved often found refuge in the slave preachers' telling of the Bible stories, where they found their own pastors of African descent who understood their unique spiritual and physical sufferings, where they developed their own coded language and hymnody to plan escapes, and where they drew spiritual strength to bear up under the peculiar institution of slavery - all far from the watching eyes of their masters and their plantation overseers. Across the diaspora and throughout the wider invisible institution of slavery and African faith, penalties for involvement in 'suspicious' religious activities were harsh and perpetuated a spiritual terrorism after the pattern of Cain against Abel, from one powerful dominant community claiming Christianity to another Christian community in the subdominant cultural position.[18]

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[18] For a deeper understanding of American hush harbours, the 'peculiar institution' of slavery and the development of the Black church under American slaving system, see Albert J. Raboteau's *Slave Religion: The 'Invisible Institution' in the Antebellum South*, Albert J. Raboteau (Oxford University Press, 2004) and John W. Blassingame's *Slave Testimony: Two Centuries of Letters, Speeches, Interviews, and Autobiographies* (LSU Press, 1977).

Shortly after determining leadership, the day arrived when the authorities arrived to escort Martin and the Freundlichs to prison. The congregation and the Carstens had met to strengthen them before their conviction. Prayers were offered up at this special service for endurance and faithfulness. Before they were led away, Pastor Martin baptised ten more Africans. The authorities walked their three prisoners to the jailhouse with the entire congregation of roughly five hundred slave and free men and women, weeping, praying, and singing, accompanying them. The scene must have been a powerful witness to the surrounding cultures as to the strength of their community, their priorities, and the unity of this uncommon family; hundreds of committed, beleaguered, and identifiable Christians winding through the town for miles; there was no hiding their allegiance on this day as they called power and strength from heaven with one voice. Public prayer was known to raise Cain's ire and draw unwanted attention and even violence to the Moravian community. A white physician was asked to bleed a sick African brother, but he refused Instead, when the same brother was found praying (no doubt for healing and the man's deliverance), he 'heaped great scorn on him because he had caught him praying' (Oldendorp 1987: 237). The brothers tried to persuade the physician that prayer was no reason to withhold care from the patient. Oldendorp notes that the Moravian community - including the patient - were able to turn the doctor's negligence to good for the Gospel, as the more the doctor isolated the man for his faith the more fervently the African brother prayed to God for the physician's salvation.

Martin and the Freundlichs remained in deplorable conditions in prison for almost a month before their cases went to trial. Yet like the Apostle Paul, Martin spent his days writing letters to the Herrnhuters in Germany and letters to those needing religious instruction on the island. Martin and the Freundlichs appeared in court to face Pastor Borm's charges; for the Freundlichs, the charge was 'constituting a public nuisance.' For Pastor Martin, the charges were 'misrepresenting authority, establishing a church community without proper ordination, impersonating a minister of the church, and administering the sacraments' (which were solely the domain of legally ordained ministers). When she was not participating in court proceedings, Rebekka passed her time mending and tending to the mercy needs of guards and their fellow inmates. In their time

out of court, Matthäus and Friedrich Martin continued teaching throughout the prison, and all three saw several jailhouse conversions occur among guards and prisoners alike.

Meanwhile, the African Moravians outside the prison continued the work and expanded to other plantations, sending catechumens to the prison window for instruction. Later, when Martin took sick due to the prison conditions, the Carstens petitioned for his transition from the prison's oppressive climate to their home under house arrest. While he recuperated, new converts were sent in a steady stream to his bedside for catechising and religious instruction. In just two months, the congregation grew from five hundred to six hundred and fifty inside and outside the prison.

Refusing to swear the oaths in court, and refusing to be remarried since they felt their first marriage was legitimate, the Freundlichs were sentenced for living together without proper social and ecclesial authority. Matthäus was sentenced to lifelong penal servitude, and Rebekka was consigned once again to the slave system, to be sold off the island. They waited in prison for their sentences to be carried out, still ministering to the guards and their fellow inmates.

In a rage stoked by the church's new growth, by the Freundlich's refusal to swear by oath in court on religious grounds, and by their refusal to be remarried, Pastor Borm began an inquisition of all Africans whom Pastor Martin had baptised. Their understanding of Christian doctrine was scrutinised by officials of the lower courts, Pastor Borm, his entire church council, and any interested citizens and planters to whom Borm gave permission to attend. To be summoned and quizzed publicly by the most powerful people on the island would certainly have been terrifying, if they had not been so well prepared in their worship and teaching sessions.

When Count von Zinzendorf initially arrived from Herrnhut, he was shocked to see the condition of the church. Zinzendorf sprang into action and quickly assessed the situation to correct the injustices and confusion surrounding Martin's authority, since the validity of his ordination lay at the heart of the baptisms, marriages, performing of sacraments, teaching, and any other fault that Pastor Borm could find. As landed gentry with intimate connections to the Crown (the mission, after all, had begun with Anton Ulrich meeting Zinzendorf at Frederick V's coronation), Zinzendorf carried a great deal of political weight with the Danish-Norwegian king who was already sympathetic to the work being carried out on St. Thomas Island. His wife and sisters' financial and spiritual support behind the first wave of missionaries, Dober and Nitschmann, made him even more so.

Within twenty-four hours of his arrival, Zinzendorf petitioned to temporarily affirm Pastor Martin's ordination until the Royal Concession of 1733 could be approved and sealed for all the church's activities. This move effectively swept the legs out from under Pastor Borm and the Danish governor's opposition. Once Zinzendorf acquired this temporary agreement, the Crown's sympathies, and support for the African and European Moravians were fully displayed. The charges against the Freundlichs and Pastor Martin were dropped, and the three were released from prison never to be incarcerated again.

Although the issue of proper authority was dealt with, the culture continued its violent, Cainian aggression against the St. Thomas Moravians. Since the plantocracy could no longer attack the pious character of the African and European Brethren, they launched their offensive against the new converts, particularly abusing their bodies and their personal property, to discourage conversions; if they could make a painful example out of one, others would weaken and lose interest in paying the cost to follow; localised aggressions against new converts and elders alike intensified, even though the courts had been satisfied. John Kea observes the power dynamic at work:

> Relations of power were organised around planters' constructions of race, class, culture and gender. Within the plantation system's economy of power and symbolic order, the planters were interpolated as inherently superior subjects, and as natural masters they could, with seeming impunity, physically assault their workers, whom the signifying discourses constructed as racialized inferiors and subhuman. The slaves' appropriation of Pietism destabilised the plantation owners' notion of Blacks. The dominant modes of inscription could not view the converts in their "leisure and humanity," hence the pitiless resolve to stop Moravian evangelism …. New converts were still attacked and beaten, books burned, church services disrupted (Mancke and Shammas, 2015: 128).

2.9   Summary

Magdalena, Martin, the Freundlichs, von Zinzendorf, Spangenberg, the Carstens, the Ulrich family, and others named herein are just some of the major players who unwittingly helped write the 'Black Book of Acts' simply by playing their assigned roles of the story. The legacy of Cainian violence against Abel's legacy of doxological worship throughout their story is clear, and it is also clear that the St. Thomas Moravians lived a Christian alternative witness under the extreme pressure exerted by those under the sway of false narratives from the culture and institutional church. They are a tiny, historical repeat performance of the classic struggle between the two garden brothers, and ultimately Satan's age-old hostility toward obedience to the Creator, Christ.

Their narrative and testimony indicate that St. Thomas Island in 1732 was fertile soil for a Christian alternative witness to the chaos, violence, and dehumanisation carried

out by at least three identifiable Cainian groups: the traditional Africans, the plantocracy and their overseers, and even the religious establishment. Through their truthful witness as a community that more closely lived the life of Christ, the ancient story, and that claimed the primary identity of the people of God against the pull of culture, the various island cultures were able to meet a truthful narrative that indicted every false narrative it encountered and invited their adherents from falsehood to truth.

Sensbach refers to the St. Thomas Moravian community as a 'Black Book of Acts,' an association clearly driven by how often the community's experiences reflected those of the New Testament saints (Sensbach 2005: 237). The animosity from inside the church as well as from their surrounding cultures, certainly gives the community a similar shape. Still, their own self-reflection and character comparisons to biblical ancestors such as Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch also frame them as a similar community as seen in the Book of Acts. Combine this with the Moravian community's endurance was undergirded by several priorities that often surfaced in testimonies, such as kingdom prayer, priority of the Word and literacy, and particularly attention to study and the sacraments of Christian baptism and the Lord's supper, and a strong picture of the communal life in Acts emerges.

The St. Thomas Moravians reveal a model of Lordship that Christians may still exercise today. There were many things about the St. Thomas church as they lived and suffered faithfully under hostility, and as they loved those who were hostile toward them, that Scripture praises as 'faithful.' Such faithful reconciliation and grace were not exhibited by pastor Borm or other hostile Christians and traditional Africans on the island. Borm in particular holds a number of lessons from which today's confessionally Reformed and broad evangelicals can benefit, as theologians among the confessionally Reformed would similarly struggle with racialized and segregationist epistemology and ethic into the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Borm went astray in presuming that he, like Cain, could seize lordship from Christ and determine who could receive essential blessings of the Christian life that were held in high regard among the Moravians. On the island, his race and doctrinal essentialism led him to vigorously restrict who could intermarry, access church leadership positions, and distribute and receive Christian baptism and the Lord's supper. Among southern Presbyterian ministers in the American south, the writings of R. L. Dabney, his successor James Henry Thornwell, and R.L. Rushdooney stand as heirs to a Cainian race essentialism that seizes lordship over the body of Christ through ethnic supremacy. These writers are still cited by kinists and segregationist

advocates who promote a distinct separation of cultural and national groups by some fringe Reformed into the through the late twentieth and twenty first centuries, and softer forms of cultural and racial essentialism still permeate the works of Reformed-leaning teachers like Douglas Wilson and Steve Wilkins who reject segregation but who still hold sympathies toward Southern secessionist, separatist, and nationalist views.

The American Reformed theologian John Frame, whose approach to covenantal theology lays the foundation for this thesis, could be interpreted as hinting a soft defence of segregation that minimizes racial segregation when he writes:

> It is often valuable for people to be educated in schools of one race or gender. There has never been any proof that racial or gender diversity is a major positive factor in education … Of course, if I were black, my history would force me to reflect on my race more often. If I were a woman, I would reflect more often on my gender. But it is important to remember that for us *race and gender are secondary issues.* (Frame 2007: 676-677, emphasis mine).

However, a charitable reading uncovers a robust condemnation of the race essentialism that drove the global slave trade and scarred the church. Frame also offers a clear exhortation to reject historical Reformed segregationists like Dabney (Frame 2007: 660-683, 679). To this exhortation he adds, not excludes, a robust call for historical self-reflection of his own privileged, cognitively European, confessionally Reformed denomination that kinists would reject; that is, the Presbyterian Church in America, to which I also belong. He further enumerates sociological and ethical reasons beyond race essentialism for the absence of visible minorities throughout Reformed theology at the time of his writing. He cites a more academic and cognitively oriented teaching style (as opposed to the more intuitive style of the American Black church), the emphasis on high academic qualifications for pastoral ordination that are a stumbling block to those globally without access to higher education (Frame 2007: 681). He advocates for a broader range of preparatory methods for educating and ordaining. Later in the above referenced passage, Frame makes recommendations for church planting that are more in keeping with the faithful St. Thomas Moravians missiological style, including installing indigenous leadership as soon as possible in the life of the community, and placing the culturally dominant leader in a role of service to those in the majority world or marginalized communities. With discourse around the disabled, Frame continues applying the same grace-based, identity drive discourse on effective inclusion of other cultural minorities in the life of the church, focusing on what marginalized communities teach us about our arrogant presumptions about ourselves that, if unchecked, lead to Cainian essentialism (Frame 2007: 682-683).

Most contemporary confessionally Reformed theologians are bound by their

denominations to advocate for the unity and diversity of the church across ethnic and cultural lines. Most follow a biblical and theological premise that emphasizes equality, union, and in and through Christ (e.g., Ephesians 2:14-16, Galatians 3:28). John Frame would be counted as one among such.

Still, those of us who defend Reformed theology must remain watchful for any essentialism that robs us of the full life of Christ where Christians of all persuasions find access to the covenantal story; through union with Him. On the seductive temptation of man-centred essentialism, which appears in every generation of Reformed history, the Reformed are constantly faced with the legacies of the two brothers. We can, as Augustine writes, reject God's offer of grace like Cain the transgressor, represent ourselves only as earthly possessors, and allow the envy of vice to grow stronger within us until we 'lay our plans and kill our brother.' Conversely, we do better to take the way of Abel, through the legacy of doxological obedience lived on through the line of Seth as he preconfigured Christ. We may call upon the name of the Lord, and 'represent the unity of the whole supernal city that is not yet fulfilled but is due to be fulfilled in the eschaton.' (Augustine 2012-2013: 148, 171).

Just as Reformed Pastor Borm and the Christian *Bläncken*'s Cainian hostility splintered forward into modern Reformed kinism, the St. Thomas Moravians stand as a modern model and alternative witness in their godly resistance to that hostility. Together with the island's hostile non-Christian culture, some in the covenantally Reformed community terrorized the Moravians for their faithfulness to ethnic dignity in their congregations, marriages, and homes. Here, there is an irony: the St. Thomas Moravians, though not covenantally Reformed, still reflected the ethic of the covenantal story; the covenantally Reformed on St. Thomas, though Reformed themselves, did not. This leads to the idea that the covenantal story, when considered in a literary sense as a story with a beginning, middle and end, is not limited to a particular doctrinal system; when read through the covenantal approach, it is a meta-narrative that Scripture tells of itself.

Christ didn't desire or require the African Moravians to be 'rid' of their Africanness because their ethnicity was not a sinful condition. Rather the Moravians, consciously or unconsciously, displayed openly that the varied ethnicities among them were an integral part of the ingathering of all nations, tongues and tribes. This language is specific, and is an essential part of the mission and telos of the story of the people of God on earth and in eternity. That the enslaved African could participate fully in the life of the church was a witness to the promise that chafed against those who rejected their faithfulness. Those who

excluded the faithful from the life of Christ's body on temporal terms ran the risk of exclusion themselves. The St. Thomas Moravians still challenge today's church resisting the sin of seizing lordship, and modelling a faithfulness to the Lordship of Christ as a witness that proclaimed, 'If you challenge us on this, we are willing to suffer and die as our Saviour did only to live forever with him.'

Having established the community's context and priorities, I turn now to the practices that defined eighteenth-century Philadelphian communities planted by Zinzendorf, and to the character that set the African Moravians in contrast to all other cultures on St. Thomas Island. It should be acknowledged that the Philadelphian Ideals did not place the St. Thomas Moravians in a premise drive by a Reformed, covenantal federal theology; however, they still practiced and lived the beginning, middle and end of a truthful narrative formed by a covenantal reading of Scripture. Conversely, in looking at the ethics and race essentialism of some the Reformed *Bläncken* on the island, holding to and preaching a covenantal understanding did not yield an ethical coherence to the story of the people of God. The Moravians' lack of a covenantal interpretation did not prevent them from identifying with, and holding to, the story of the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, with its eschatological ingathering his elect from every tongue, tribe and nation. In other words, a conscious lack of understanding the covenantal approach to the story didn't prevent the Moravians from entering the story, and access to a covenantal approach didn't produce in the island's Reformed an ethical character in consonance with the story.

This highlights the significance of *sola fide* and the insufficiency of human works and trust in doctrinal premises to gain entrée into the household of faith. A doxological understanding of obedience ensures that everyone can enter the ongoing community of faithfulness, and that everyone can practice faithfulness after the pattern of Abel as they are transformed through the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ. This is inclusive of not only every nation tongue and tribe as defined by temporal and sociological categories, but all who are marginalized by their sin condition rather than their sociological status. The covenantal approach to the story of the people of God ensures that any believer's ability to persevere is first enabled, and then sustained by God (perseverance of the saints); man's obedience is the response that produces endurance. Our 'obedience' is a matter of heart orientation and is not limited by our ability or inability to 'perform' rightly. This underscores this thesis' assertion that obedience in Christian endurance must come from a doxological posture, not a presumptive salvific one, in

which the believer finds catholicity with Paul and the New Testament church in our contemporary thinking:

> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:1-10).

To summarize, covenantal theology in and of itself holds no power to transform the destructive, hostile legacy of Cain. This Spirit induced faith of which Paul writes in this passage encompasses the grace of God, transformation, kingdom ethics, a doxological approach to works, harmony with the covenantal story, and eschatological anticipation and fulfilment. These are all expressed by Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians. It is only through a genuine encounter with the true and transformative Christ that one passes from a Cainian orientation to that of Abel.

The next chapter uncovers the spiritual habits that clarify the lives and witness of the St. Thomas Moravians, reflecting on the story-bearing sacraments of the faith. Baptism figures prominently in the Moravian community, and in the false baptism narrative present in the communities that resisted them. The legitimacy of the congregants' baptism serves as a point of attack for Pastor Borm in the Moravians' testimony. Therefore, a new question arises regarding baptism's role in endurance under anti-Christian hostility. In chapter six, I've devoted particular attention to the sacrament of Christian baptism within the premise of the story, what shifts in their priority and identity can be noted, and the significance and limitations of worship rites overall to Christian endurance under hostility.

Chapter 3: Understanding Persecution through a Cain and Abel Premise

3. CHAPTER 3: THE CAIN AND ABEL PREMISE

This project leads with a traditional understanding of covenantal theology as its foundation. It also borrows helpful concepts from early narrative theologians to create an operational lens to explore the doctrine (epistemology) and habits (ethics) of the St. Thomas Moravian community. This is kept in the context of a singular story in which all of humanity participates. These varied approaches highlight different aspects of the ethics of the covenantal story that are helpful to this study; the covenantal aspects focus on the coherence of Scripture and God's character in the faithful telling of this story (epistemology), and the narratival aspects in the Christian community's focus on the life of Jesus and their habits in living after his pattern and according to his character (ethics).

3.1 Covenantal and Narrative Theology

Frame's covenantal approach affirms that scripture's story focuses on a set-apart people who are created in Genesis 1-2, kept by that Creator according to a covenantal promise: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people,' who multiply by means that are antithetical to the world's methodologies and philosophies, and are ingathered from all nations, tongues, and tribes. These people are rightly called by his name, they are returned to their rightful place in his presence and in his dwelling place, and the covenantal promise 'I will be your God, and you will be my people' is ultimately fulfilled and consummated:

> Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:1-3).

As mentioned at the end of chapter one, Revelation 21 reveals the telos of the covenantal story that drives the hope of such communities of character*;* it powerfully defines and modifies the noun 'character.' Whose character? Christ's character. Not merely his virtues and ethics applied to our various life situations, but his priorities, loyalties, plans, and his people as a community that is defined and set apart by his life, death, resurrection and glorification. This character is further defined politically by the government rests on his shoulders as its reigning King (Isaiah 9, Psalm 132, Luke 1).

With the covenantal story and its promises as primary foci, persecuted groups who follow Christ in sacrificial obedience can be defined as a 'continuing community of believers formed of many ethnicities, subsumed under one primary Christ-centred story, whose Christian practice has been profoundly shaped by the hostility of the more socially dominant cultures around them.' Their distinctive, story- driven ethics and epistemology give them a natural 'other-cultural,' 'other-political' character that simultaneously indicts as it invites; it indicts the unethical and destructive cultures that surround and persecute them, while also inviting individuals to leave those identities and join theirs in Christ.

Having acknowledged in chapter one that postliberal narrative theology differs in its approach to a biblical metanarrative, it's necessary to point out where some of its story-related principles have benefited this research. Narrative theologian Samuel Wells challenges Constantinian formulations of Christian social ethics that 'assume that it is the Christian's duty to make the world come out right' (Wells, 1995: 103). Stanley Hauerwas presupposes that a minority Christian community can yield social results as a by-product of suffering love.

The St. Thomas community remained faithful and self-identified as 'the people capable of remembering and telling the story we find in Jesus' (Wells, 1995: 107), a people who exist for the benefit of the world without seeking to dominate it. This definition fits the rubric of alternative witness and ethics set out by Hauerwas: that the Church is a 'community which tries to develop the resources to stand within the world, witnessing to the peaceable kingdom and thus rightly understanding the world' (Hauerwas, 1983: 101). Such communities and their practices, ethics, and how they identify themselves, provide an understanding of our past, present and future redemptive history. Wells notes Hauerwas' hermeneutical point: 'There is a spiralling relationship … between the text and the extent to which a community puts it into practice. Inhabiting the world that the text demands constitute accepting scriptural authority. The text is read truthfully by a community which seeks to establish its form of life under the text; reading theoretically, outside the context of the practising community, is not reading 'objectively' but reading 'unfaithfully'' (Wells 1995: 74). This means that all other temporally based 'theologies' and ideologies, whether they are based in nationalism, one's ethnicity, or other false and anthropocentric gods, unfaithful readings of Scripture, violate the story of the life and mission of Jesus. *The Peaceable Kingdom* explores the *communio sanctorum*, or communion of the saints, as a historical community and a present and future reality.

Hauerwas is anxious to maintain the historical character of virtue, steering the conversation of 'obedience' away from the term sanctification and toward language that speaks more concretely about participation in the Church community (Hauerwas, 1983: 94). This provides a helpful balance to the conversation regarding the obedience of both Abel and Christ for this premise, as it's desirable to broaden the understanding of individual and communal obedience beyond spiritual sanctification, without jettisoning the idea of sanctification altogether. Conformation to the person of Christ in Christian formation, particularly in his sufferings, is also essential to determining the truth of the narrative. A truthful narrative and the communion of saints through an embodied Christology (his life, sufferings, joys, single-minded focus, holiness, social ostracisation, embrace of hope, courage, re-humanization, fidelity, death, mission, and resurrection) emerged, and provided a key for identifying practices for this community.

The covenantal approach offers an Aristotelian 'beginning, middle, and end' to this story that coheres from Genesis to Revelation. Though the covenantal approach has limitations in other areas, it establishes well the story of a global people created, set apart, kept, preserved, and gathered back to God through the active, promised, and finished work of Christ the Creator. The covenantal story, and the relationship between the Creator and his people, draw life from the covenantal promise, *I will be your God, and you will be my people.* In the Edenic Covenant, God promises Adam a life and blessings, conditional upon his obedience to God's command not to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. (Genesis 2:16-17). In the covenantal motif, the blessings of life result in obedience to the terms of the covenant, while the cursing and death follow disobedience to the terms of the covenant. Even the covenant itself is a gracious extension of God's character, love and generosity for his own. Adam's penalty for disobedience would be physical and spiritual death as well as a curse on the ground, leaving man in a fallen state.

God soon makes another covenant with Adam that he swears to keep himself, that 'one who is to come' will fulfil the obedience that Adam did not. This is the Covenant of Grace, under which, in the covenantal view, all of humanity now exists. Its purpose is to bring humanity into a restored covenant relationship with Yahweh, through the death of Christ. Though not explicitly stated, the implicit statement of his covenant-keeping character is there: Yahweh has created a people for himself and will keep those people through a historical process that gathers in all he draws. This happens through the 'one who is to come,' who is promised to succeed in obedience where Adam failed. Adam's sin would not destroy God's intention to keep a set apart people for himself:

God said that to Abraham (Gen. 17:7), and he also said it to Israel under Moses (Ex. 6:7) and to the New Testament people of God (Rev. 21:3). He said this many times throughout Scripture. This means that the covenant Lord is one who takes people to be his (Frame 2008: 23-24).

The answers to questions 14-18 of the Heidelberg Catechism provide guidance on this 'one who is to come,' pointing out that no mere creature can make satisfaction for the sinner. The one who is to keep the Covenant is a true and righteous man, more powerful than all the creatures, and who is also true God. It further qualifies that the one to keep the Covenant must be both a true and righteous man as well to make satisfaction for sin, as well as true God 'that by the power of His Godhead He might bear in His manhood the burden of God's wrath, and so obtain for and restore to us righteousness and life' (Christian Reformed Church, 1989).

The covenantal promise 'I will be your God, and you will be my people,' is repeated explicitly to Moses in the Decalogue,[1] and then four more covenantal restatements (Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic) are made; that this same God will keep his people through Christ's incarnation, is the only perfect participant in humanity who can reverse the curse of death instituted in the garden. His life, death, resurrection, and glorification exist to reveal his glory to the nations and gather his set-apart people safely around his throne to fulfil the covenant promise. Finally, the covenantal story reaches its zenith in Revelation 21, with the fulfilment of the people of God as a glorified community drawn from all nations, tribes and tongues, dwelling peacefully again in the presence of Yahweh, in an even better situation of shalom, peace and presence than Adam and Woman had in the garden:

> 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and
> *they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.*'[2]

Wells writes that 'the intergenerational ties of the family teach us what it means to be historic beings. Being in a family is part of being 'stuck with' a history and a people' (Wells, 1995: 182). Yes, Christians are 'stuck with' these repeating narratives, including persecution and perseverance, but enduring Christian communities like the St. Thomas Moravians reveal how they are more of a gift than a burden. The story is given for the Christian's benefit and sanctification, and to lend meaning, purpose, identity and direction to the faith and doxological obedience in Christ for his honour, glory, and the spread of his name to the nations.

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[1] Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:4-21.
[2] Revelation 21:1-3

3.2   Cain's Religion, Abel's Worship: A Premise

There are numerous substories within the covenantal story. As noted in chapter one, this research focuses on Augustine's understanding of Cain and Abel in the Genesis account to better understand the relationship between Christ followers and their persecutors. The use of Augustine was noted in chapter one: the Cain and Abel narrative is used as a theological premise to understand the hostility that communities hold toward the believers they persecute. The Augustinian binary enabled this research to uncover the unique endurance practices that grew under hostility, according to the unique character of the people of God as their own distinct cultural minority. After the pattern of Augustine in Book XV of the *City of God*, I now further explore the legacies of Cain's enmity toward Abel in the life of Israel and the New Testament. He described the kingdoms to which each aspired and reflected on them as communities of earth and heaven living in constant tension.

Augustine draws a sharp ethical contrast between self-exaltation and sacrificial worship early in the Genesis account. The story unfolds as both brothers bring sacrifices to God. In this section, an argument is advanced that these two impulses grow into communities that reflect the values of each brother. From Cain springs a people devoted to man-centred worship, and from Abel's blood-legacy springs a community of worshippers who follow more closely the story of the people of God.

The first three chapters of Genesis sets the stage for this confrontation. God created a people for himself that he would keep in his care, who would worship him throughout history and beyond. 'I will be your God, and you will be my people' undergirds the story, from seed-promise in Genesis to glorified fulfilment in Revelation. In a covenantal understanding of the story, humanity was formed for one purpose: to dwell in peace, wisdom, harmony, and perfection, with the One Who created them.

As humanity's first generation of God's chosen people, Adam and Woman were presented with two related questions by Satan, God's primal adversary: 'Who will you worship, yourself or God (epistemology)? Who will be the arbiter and standard of right and wrong, you, or God (ethics)?' Adam chose 'self' and broke the covenant of Creation that Yahweh had chartered. As a result, subsequent generations must now respond to these same questions, including the second generation bound up in their offspring, Cain and Abel.

Genesis chapter four follows the story into the next generation as their children, Cain and Abel, choose how they will worship God.

God was displeased and rejected Cain's offering. Moreover, God's pleasure at his brother's humble, sacrificial tithe angered Cain. Jealous of God's pleasure in his brother, and despite God's open door to repent and turn the situation toward life, Cain murdered him. History's first innocent blood was spilt and cried out from the ground for God's justice.

Cain displayed a fatal violence that was an outgrowth of his envy, rage, and hatred toward his brother. He followed the path of folly to destruction instead of the principles that were good for the garden and for humanity: obedience, shalom, life, and flourishing. Conversely, Abel, pre-configured the way of Christ and the high cost of belonging to God. As Augustine observes in his binary premise, Cain approached God on his own limited, self-centred terms and according to his own autonomous reason; Abel approached God based on God's own nature, claims, and demands. Cain took the way of his parents in the garden, while Abel pre-configured the way of Christ who created him. Together, the brothers exemplified the spirit of man-centred religion versus the Spirit of true worship (Augustine 2012-2013: 136-137).

God offered an opportunity for Cain to repent, and to choose life over death before the fatal blow was struck:

> The Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it" (Genesis 4:6-7).

Cain instead chose violence, despite God's provision of a way back to belonging. Abel's existence became an offence to Cain. As long as Abel existed, so existed the memory of his insufficient worship and his primary allegiance to self. Abel's existence was both a reminder and an indictment against Cain, therefore Abel needed to be exterminated.

In the context of the African Moravians, the legacy of Cain drove both secular cultures and corrupt religious institutions, reflecting Augustine's historical extension of the age-old battle between the first family and the serpent, then to the two brothers, then to the next generation of Seth and Enoch, provides a rationale for extending the Cain and Abel premise into the rest of Scripture:

> Adam, then, was the father of both lines of descent, that is, of the line whose succession belongs to the earthly city and of the line whose succession belongs to the heavenly city. But, after Abel was killed and a wondrous mystery was intimated by his murder, there came to be two fathers, Cain and Seth, one for each line of descent; and in their sons, whose names were due to be listed, indications of these two cities began to appear with increasing clarity in the race of mortals. Cain fathered Enoch, in whose name he founded a city—the earthly city, that is, which is not on pilgrimage in this world but rather rests content with its temporal peace and temporal happiness (Augustine 2012-2013: 164).

Though generations are mentioned initially, I note here that contrasting Cain and Abel has nothing to do with blood lineage since Cain's bloodline ended with the Noahic flood. Rather, the story aims to expose as a matter of ideology the persistence of the values, habits, loyalties, heart posture, and community practices of those who follow each brother, the hostility that Cain expresses toward Abel, and the symbiotic relationship between the two.

In the next section, I expand on the dramatic conflict between the two brothers and discuss how it plays out in successive generations in the biblical narrative. Individuals make communities, communities create nations, and nations need governing forces to satisfy and maintain their interests. Israel and Judah's religious degeneration was a direct result of their conflation with ethnic and nationalist impulses and is recorded by the prophets in the life of biblical Israel. As individuals developed into families and tribes, then communities, and then kingdoms and nations, Israel and Judah's accommodation of their surrounding cultural, economic and political ideologies that were controlled by anti-Yahweh idols contributed to biblical expressions of an inwardly focused, Cainian orientation. The covenant-keeping communities of Abel in doxological obedience and Cainian covenant-violating communities displayed the two worship impulses of Israel's northern and southern kingdoms as they challenged and rebelled against the divine covenantal phrase that was to set them apart from all other surrounding cultures: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people.'

3.3   Israel's Profligacy: Cain & Abel in Community

The history of God's people in the Old Testament can be seen as a record of man's disobedience, God's discipline, promise, and covenantal commitment to restoration (Belcher 2020: 115). Nigerian theologian Musa Gotom offers a helpful reading of the fall of Israel and Judah that captures Augustine's binary premise as they grew into cities and institutions. He notes the decline in Yahweh worship in this period came through the infiltration and normalisation of foreign gods, from early in Solomon's reign and well into that of his son, Rehoboam. Gotom points to a single act of disobedience that set cascading dominoes of disobedience that split of the unified kingdom in two; when Rehoboam faced an opportunity to quell ten of the twelve tribes' unease with his leadership inherited from his father, King Solomon. Given the opportunity to follow the advice of his elders and become their servant leader, or the advice of his peers and become

a dictator, Rehoboam chose the latter. Gotom interprets the New Testament in light of the Old, observing that this violated an enduring value intended to distinguish God's people from the surrounding culture:

> Rehoboam missed the blessings of wise counsel. For us today, servant leadership is more than just a model that glues the leader to his or her people. *It is also a sign of obedience to Jesus*, who left his home in glory to become part of humanity (Phil 2:6-9) and washed his disciples' feet, giving them an example that they should follow (John 13:14-15). (Gotom 2006: 423).

Gotom muses that if Solomon, with all his religious background and experience of God could become disloyal to Yahweh the Lord God of Israel, then Jeroboam had little chance of obeying God's command and receiving the blessing Yahweh offered, yet he continually offered Israel and her leaders a way back to himself, just as he had once offered a path of restoration to Cain. Yet Israel's worship was already severely tainted by foreign gods.[3]

A bloody rebellion by the Southern forces led to Jeroboam's rise as King of Judah. An alternate capital was set up at Shechem, two golden calves fashioned and propped up at Dan and Bethel and presented as false gods to be worshipped. His language echoed Aaron's rebellious Exodus, declaring these idols as *the people's gods of deliverance*. He co-opted the covenantal treaty language that had been reserved for Yahweh himself, saying 'Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt' (1 Kings 12:28); the flagrant use of Yahweh's covenantal phrase for false gods was a clear violation of Covenantal stipulations. Gotom tells of the infiltration of the graven images of Baals (local deities) riding on the backs of bulls, a symbol of agricultural and human fertility – provisions for which Israel was to trust Yahweh to testify to his power and provision, thus indicting the idol worship of the surrounding cultures.

According to Gotom, 'faith came gradually but effectively through [idolatrous] images that were accepted as normal' (Gotom, 2006: 434). As the Levitical priesthood took a stand against the idolatry and refused to perform their assigned temple rites under blasphemous conditions, they echoed the position of Abel; willing to risk everything to worship Yahweh according to his dictates, and not man's interpretation of them. By discouraging the Israelites from travelling to Jerusalem to worship, and by conflating Yahweh's stipulations with the golden calves of Ba'al (the local deities), *this thing became a sin*,[4] breaking the first and second commandments of Yahweh's

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[3] 1 Kings 11:37-38.
[4] 1 Kings 12:21.

Covenant.[5] In Gotom's words, 'The Israelites *could not remain the people of God* while worshipping these calves' (Gotom: 2006: 433). Here, Gotom emphasises the connection between the rejection of self, idols, and foreign gods as and proper covenantal worship. Obedient worship becomes identity defining: an 'other cultural,' 'other political' reality, defined by the character and promises of Yahweh, informs the primary communal identity as the set-apart 'people of God.'

As for the dominant, culturally compromised part of the community, its worship entered full flagrancy as Jeroboam appointed anyone to the temples at Bethel and Dan willing to take the position of priest, including non-Levites.[6] As the people of Israel were led further away from true Yahweh worship, committed Yahweh worshippers abandoned what had essentially become a 'state religion' in favour of following a more obedient community of character, one whose virtues reflected those set out for them by Yahweh.

In other words, Israel, as the northern kingdom, presumed heavily upon their covenant with Yahweh, and behaved as though they had no responsibility in keeping the stipulations expressed therein. The Northern Kingdom centralised other identities as primary, minimising their own unique 'other-cultural,' 'other-political' identity created through Yahweh's covenant agreement. They erroneously believed that they were God's set-apart people *because they were Jews*, forgetting that they were Jews *because they were God's set-apart people.*

In 746 BC, the internal cancer of the Cain legacy erupted within the religious institutions and spread to its people. Israel was defeated by Assyria, and within twenty-five years the Northern Kingdom was erased from the map.

3.4   'Make Judah Great Again'

Just as the Northern Kingdom syncretised its Yahweh identity with the surrounding cultural and political identity, the Southern Kingdom of Judah similarly prioritised its political and cultural power. However, Judah's profligacy and disobedience were not so apparent at first. At the point of the national split, the cancer of religious degeneration that had eaten away at the northern kingdom of Israel was readily apparent to Judah. Because of its internal decay, and the opposition raging against the monarchy's tyranny

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[5] Exodus 20:2-4.
[6] 1 Kings 13:33-34.

from within, she was so weakened that she couldn't withstand the rival campaign of the Assyrians when they attacked.[7]

Isaiah accurately prophesied that the political alliance between Israel and the Assyrian empire would be disastrous; just as the prophet foretells Israel's fate at the hands of the Assyrians,[8] he likewise prophesied Judah's fall under the Babylonians.[9] Judah's nostalgic impulses and its homogenous population kept her social decay at bay for a time, despite the degeneration of the northern kingdom. Yet Ahaz's policies and the paganism he introduced into the culture also violated Yahweh's covenant and led to a disregard of the covenant law and, thus, their covenant identity. Throughout the reign of Judah's kings, Amos' and Micah's prophecies held both Israel and Judah's wealthy and religious elites in the same poor regard.[10]

Tasked with calling the community to covenant faithfulness, the prophets stand in the line of doxological worship of Abel, challenging Cain's misspent religiosity. But we also see the life of Abel through stories such as the unnamed 'man of God' from Judah. Through such intrusions into the larger story, we see the conflict between Cain and Abel play out yet again; cautionary stories are embedded within the story, tiny plays within the cosmic play. Gotom notes the unnamed man's Messianic prophecy:

> The Lord … sent messengers to warn them of the dangers of adopting a form of worship he had not approved. *By the word of the Lord* an unnamed man of God was sent to Bethel (1 Kings 13:1) … The message was not directed against Jeroboam, not the golden calf, nor the worshipers, *but against their altar at Bethel*. The man of God denounced it and foretold its final destruction. A son born to the house of David would one day destroy the priests of the high places *who now make offerings here*. Burning *human bones* on the altar would desecrate it so that it was no longer fit for any more sacrifices (1 Kings 13:2). This prophecy was fulfilled by King Josiah, some three hundred years after it was uttered (2 Kings 23:15-16) (Gotom 2006: 432-433).

Though poor economic conditions besieged the southern kingdom, it was their syncretism with surrounding cults that had the greatest impact. Economic conditions were a contributing factor in Judah's downfall, but they were, by and large, tied to covenantal violations. Prophets Isaiah, Micah and Amos all had open rebuke and warning for Judah's rich who exploited the poor and devoted more time and resources to the interest of the corrupt state. The state was the only force that could help maintain their positions of wealth and power, and its temptations overrode proper worship of Yahweh and care for his people. Contributing to Judah's spiritual adultery was the character of the kings of

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[7] 2 Kings 15:8-28.
[8] 2 Kings 17.
[9] 2 Chronicles 36; Daniel 1:1–2.
[10] Micah 1:1-5.

Judah who rejected the Lord by prophets and priests – the religious establishment - are also clearly condemned by Jeremiah, showing that the whole country is corrupt (Belcher 2020: 120-121).

The worship of Yahweh became perfunctory with mere temple actions thought to be sufficient, requiring no application outside of the Temple's walls – and thus, their poor epistemology (what they knew about God) led to poor ethics (how they obeyed God). Hosea's lament for the northern kingdom echoes well into the conditions of the southern kingdom: Yahweh desires 'mercy and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings' (Hosea 6:6). Each restatement of this in biblical history shows the constancy of the wandering heart of God's people toward national and ethnic idolatry, echoing the command inherent in Yahweh's written covenant under the Mosaic administration, or the *Shema*: 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might' (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

3.5   Summary

Israel and Judah violated a singular principle: that the whole Law (including offerings and sacrifices) was to serve as an expression of their covenant love for the Lord and designed to set them apart from their surrounding idolatrous cultures. Their knowledge of the One true and living God was intended to affect every area of their individual and personal lives, with continual repentance and without compromise, as a living response to the promise. The purpose of the covenantal law was for 'the nations to admire the laws the God had given to Israel, and the wisdom and understanding of the people that these laws elicit';[11] it was so that God's people would provide an alternative witness to other nations, particularly her worst enemies' (Frame 2013: 72-72).

The covenant was the 'suzerainty treaty between God and Israel, intended to be the 'constitution of the nation of Israel, placed in the ark of the covenant, the holiest place in Israel; it was to be unconditional in that 'God certainly achieves the purposes for which he made the covenant. But at this moment in Israel's history, Frame interprets it as gracious yet conditional, in that Israel receives the blessings only by a living, obedient faith' (Frame 2013: 74).

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[11] Deuteronomy 4: 5-8.

The nation twisted the covenantal narrative into a false one by presuming on the covenant itself. They presumed there would be no consequences for breaking their covenantal relationship with Yahweh. The Cainian orientation took hold and grew into an ossified establishment, and judgement on the covenantal household was inevitable.

The struggle between Cain and Abel grew from the two brothers to encompass kingdoms. In the Genesis account, two individuals displayed two sets of values, one leading to fatal violence against the other. Cain passed on the unregulated spirit of rebellion he inherited from his parents to the communities he created, which developed into systems and values upon which nations and governments were founded. The peaceful orientation of Abel likewise continued to develop into individuals and communities of character. They, too, pepper the biblical landscape as prophets, faithful kings, and ordinary covenant keepers despite Israel's profligacy. They follow Christ to the cross and reappear as the burgeoning persecuted *ekklesia* in the New Testament.

It was not long before the northern kingdom of Judah joined Israel in the descent into flagrant apostasy, as the deep longing for the civility and order of the pre-monarchic 'good old days' were replaced by political and cultural compromise and self-interest of elites. Neither the Northern or Southern Kingdoms was immune to the legacy of Cain. Stephen J. Keillor affirms the distinction between communal obedience and disobedience as both historical and biblical reality: Yahweh worship 'was not invented by humans, nor was it primarily designed to meet human needs,' at least not in the way that temporal governments and social constructs were (Keillor 1996:19-20).

Keillor notes that through the prophet Isaiah, Yahweh announced that rebellion was his people's characteristic response: 'I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner/ manager, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand…' (Keillor 1996: 19-20).[12,13]

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[12] In *This Rebellious House,* Keillor builds on this argument as he discusses Europe's flagrant dismissal of prophetic warnings against greed, usury and ill-gotten gain from the burgeoning Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Numerous New Testament passages on false teachers, human rebellion, the world's hatred of God and human hypocrisy could also be cited. See, for example, the apostle Paul's warning in Romans 8:6-8. Later in this chapter, I will consider Keillor's argument considering the church's profligacy in its approval of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.
[13] Isaiah 1:2-3; 29:13.

Keillor's ideas are clarifying as this project turns to Cainian impulses in the New World and the Americas. He gives voice to the idea of a repeating historical narrative of idol worship in competition with Yahweh and concludes that 'running through Old and New Testaments is the stark reality that human rebellion produces a split between those who falsely claim to be his people and those who truly are his people. The latter characteristically obey him, but sometimes they rebel too' (Keillor 2006: 20). We see this by the admonitions of the Bible's major prophets, and by the ordinary and numerous 'stories within the grand Story,' that while Cain may have the dominant social voice, obedience is often accompanied by a smaller prophetic voice exemplifying the ethos of Abel. The two worldviews, like the two brothers, remain at odds.

The prophets, the Levites, and the righteous remnant of Yahweh worshippers all rejected the prevailing national theologies. As they watched their nations crumbling from within,[14] and as they descended into degeneracy where the faithful would only be a small, suffering remnant, Isaiah remains hopeful by prophesying a community of character and obedience that will carry the hope of Yahweh's redemption forward. They did this by remaining faithful to a truthful telling of the story of God's people and their unique covenantal identity, thus creating a foundational model for the New Testament saints and those who would come after them, such as the St. Thomas Moravians. Their faithfulness set them apart as a people committed to Yahweh's other-cultural, other-political reality looking for the hope of Messiah. These prophets reflected a historical communal continuum empowered by conformity to a coming Suffering Servant whose life, death and resurrection realised an in-breaking of an eschatological reality, providing an alternative witness for the rest of the world.

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[14] Isaiah 3:1-12.

Chapter 4: Patterns of Profligacy: Cain in the New World

4.   CHAPTER 4: CAIN IN THE NEW WORLD

Cain's profligacy pattern permeates fallen human nature and persists throughout history; Abel's voice counters Cain's rebellion. As argued throughout chapters one and two, this persistence on both sides has made the Cain and Abel dynamic a significant contributing factor to the cultural context of the St. Thomas Moravian congregation. An overview of several historians' perspectives on the church's ecclesial syncretism, and how they played the role of the Cain in the decades leading up to the Danish colonisation of the West Indies where St. Thomas was then situated, help frame the Moravian African and Europeans as the persistent voice of Abel. In this chapter, I draw from scholars on the New World to demonstrate how the Cain and Abel dynamic set the stage for the appearance of a counter-polis on St. Thomas Island, in 1732. I have split the historians into two groups.

The first comprises those who accuse the Christian church-at-large of *sins of commission*. These historians are largely committed to the view that the European church-at-large not only exported a particularly racialised Eurocentric Christianity across the world, but that this colonising expansion was considered divinely ordained. The second set of historians assert the Christian church is more guilty of *sins of omission.* They argue that there were numerous other driving factors besides racial supremacy and divine destiny, forces that conspired to take advantage of ecclesial apathy to a much larger culture of greed, dehumanisation, comfort, luxury, dissipation, licentiousness, and new-found wealth accumulation. These historians present a case for the ongoing presence of Abel's obedient and prophetic spirit among all ethnicities. They paint this subdominant prophetic group as a distinct and genuinely biblical cultural minority, contained within the depraved religious and non-religious majority.

4.1   The Cain's Expansion into the New World

Augustine affirms that idolatry lies at the centre of the Cainian orientation. This idolatry and self-focus led directly to the unearned suffering and death of his brother. Augustine also affirms that the character of the two orientations, love for self and love for God, rings down through scripture and into redemptive history with similar results:

Two loves, then, have made two cities. Love of self, even to the point of contempt for God, made

the earthly city, and love of God, even to the point of contempt for self, made the heavenly city. Thus the former glories in itself, and the latter glories in the Lord. The former seeks its glory from men, but the latter finds its highest glory in God, the witness of our conscience. The former lifts up its head in its own glory; the latter says to its God, *My glory, and the one who lifts up my head* (Ps 3:3). In the former the lust for domination dominates both its princes and the nations that it subjugates; in the latter both leaders and followers serve one another in love, the leaders by their counsel, the followers by their obedience. The former loves its own strength, displayed in its men of power; the latter says to its God, *I love you, O Lord, my strength* (Ps 18:1) (Augustine 2012-2013: 136-137).

City of God thus traced the legacies of Cain and Abel from scripture into Augustine's own Roman context to explore various expressions of the Cain and Abel orientations around him. He charted the growth of Cain's earthly city from its inception to its eventual fall at the hands of the Visigoths in 410 AD (Augustine 2012-2013: 502-503). The theologian then used the binary to analyse Roman society, attributing the culture's pagan idolatry with its destruction and contrasting it with the lifegiving principles espoused by the Christian community. Though Rome had grown into a great empire, it was still subject to downfall via long-0held superstitions and traditions.[2] The myth of Romulus and Remus, twin sons of a vestal virgin and Mars, the god of war, embodied themes of birth, betrayal, and legacy that were foundational to Roman identity. Abandoned and nurtured by a she-wolf, the twins reclaimed their royal lineage by defeating a tyrant uncle. In a tragic clash of visions for a new city, Romulus killed Remus, marking Rome's origins with fratricidal bloodshed (Augustine 2012-2013: 502-503).

Following Augustine's binary approach to analysing Rome, I have brought the legacies of Cain and Abel further forward into history to explore how they shaped the eighteenth-century context of the early Americas and the lives of the St. Thomas Moravians. Using Augustine's premise, I explored the legacy of Cain's hostility toward Abel. Expressions of Cain within the church were also examined, alongside Cain's opportunities for redemption.

Idolatry that leads to destruction of the human person is sewn into the human condition; it is the Achilles heel of humanity at large, and it also infects the systems of the institutional church. The advance of Spain into the Americas marked a new chapter of mistaken Christian identity, and stands as an example of Cain pressing into other cultures for religious and geo-political purposes with temporal nation building in view. The pattern of a national theology seen in Israel and Judah reveals the persistence of the human desire

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[2] In *The City of God* Books 1 and 2, Augustine addresses the 410 AD sacking of Rome by the Visigoths, responding to claims that abandoning pagan gods caused Rome's fall. He argues that Rome's decline stemmed from its moral corruption and idolatry, contrasting the transient "City of Man" with the eternal "City of God."

for cultural and political dominance, even among God's people. The pattern of Biblical Israel helps us understand the strong communal impulse to prematurely establish the order and peace reserved for the eschatological realm. We can take Israel's pattern of religious degeneration as a by-product of national and cultural veneration and apply it to this impulse that dominated church and society in the Americas and overshadowed genuine kingdom expansion.

This altered view of Christ's mission in the world was unique, as religious institutions centred on the flourishing of ethnic groups in the Americas. It placed high value on maintaining one ethnic group's own cultural dominance through the accumulation of wealth and the assertion of power, and justified that dominance through appeal to the will, election, preferences, and divine providence of the Christian God. It framed Cain as a militant coloniser, only to be overshadowed by Cain as the Militant Liberator, a concept that will be addressed in chapter seven. In the early exploration of the Americas, 'Cain the militant coloniser' was obsessed with political power, physical coercion, and violence, rather than redemptive power and sub-dominant cultural suffering as a set-apart people.

4.2   Cain as a Militant Coloniser

Some historians argue that the European church wilfully conflated Christianity and their own ethnocentrism, noting that this departure from any semblance of the covenantal story arose as the Catholic Church expanded Spain's monarchy, specifically through the Iberian exploration into the 'New World.' In *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*, Dr William Jennings pinpoints a theological-racial beginning for Western Christianity with strong ethnic, political, and geopolitical echoes expressed through Israel's Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Jennings surveys the hermeneutical horizon of pre-expansionist Europe and finds the origin of the colonising hermeneutic amongst Spain's monarchy, and how they perceived themselves as extensions of God in a blurring of the Creator/creature distinction, and a misunderstanding of the doctrine of incarnation:

> In space and time, into the instability of the world came a new point of stability and life. Equally important is the *arche, the beginning.* Jesus Christ is the beginning of all things. All things belong to him as text belongs to author. The doctrine of divine enfleshment yields both the idea of divine ownership and that of salvation embodied in the here and now. This special sense of embodiment undergirds Nicholas V's sense of geographic authority over all peoples and all lands. God in Christ allows humans to participate in his life, and within that participation there exists a transferability of his authority to humans. As the central point of transferability, the representative of Christ, Nicholas V, may delegate Prince Henry and his cohort to act on his behalf. It is precisely at this point of delegation that establishes a trajectory reaching from Henry through the pope back to the incarnation itself – a trajectory of ownership and salvation" (Jennings 2010: 28).

Jennings draws on early documentation of the Iberian exploration through their politically appointed New World chroniclers, and dwells particularly on Portugal's Gomes Eanes de Zurara (1410-1474), Italy's Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), Spanish missionary José de Acosta (1539-1600), and Jesuit missionary Alessandro Valignano (1539-1606).

Jennings describes the cultural soil from which these unique Christian-geo-political dynamics sprang. He turns first to Gomes Eanes de Zurara (1444), the notable historian who served at the pleasure of Prince Henry. Zurara was tasked with chronicling what would become known as the Age of Discovery, and in doing so shaped a Christian identity (God's people) based on racial qualities. This is a foundation upon which Spanish theologians will build, an existential and theological hierarchy in rebellion against biblical Christology, anthropology and eschatology. As such, it not only represents a major deviation from the covenantal story, but it also does violence to it.

Jennings grants that Zurara's hierarchy was borne from his need to make moral sense of the evils of the burgeoning slave system, and of the cognitive dissonance it produced for his own Christianity. Yet according to Jennings, Zurara's interpretation of the New World:

> … signifies much more than the beginnings of racial formation on a global scale: it is an architecture that signals displacement. Herein lies the deepest theological problem. Zurara brings into view the crossing of a threshold into a distorting vision of creation. This distorting vision of creation will lodge itself deeply in Christian thought, damaging doctrinal trajectories. My use of the word distortion does not imply a prior coherent, healthy, and happy vision of creation that will be lost in the age of discovery. The newness of the world was unanticipated by all. That newness coupled with European power, greed-filled ambition, and discursive priority drew distorting form out of Christian theology. The process is theological because it is ecclesial. This kind of comparative thinking was not simply the child of burgeoning colonial nation-states. Church and state, popes and kings and queens enfold each other in bringing forth new ways of interfacing with their world. This is truly an inter-course. However, in this joining the church establishes the premise within which the nations will interpret not only their statecraft but also the peoples they encounter through exploration and conquest. In his bull Romanus Pontifex of January 8, 1455, Pope Nicholas V displays the power of ecclesial dictum by summarily awarding regions of the known world to Portugal… (Jennings 2010: 25-26).

In the sixteenth century, Jose de Acosta and Alessandro Valignano rose as central figures whose theological work was built upon Zurara's historical observations. Both Jennings and Alisdair MacIntyre observe that de Acosta marks a 'significant epistemological crisis in the history of Christian theology' (Jennings 2010: 70). MacIntyre admits that Acosta's presence in Peru, and his perceptions of this strange New World, brought a profound shift in thinking on his own modernism given the seeming lack of

modernity among the indigenous populations he encountered. This shift yields the first incidences of colonialist gaze (MacIntyre 1988: 354). Jennings, however, goes further to note that when Acosta planted his

> …feet on the ground, he stepped into a world, the *India Occidentales*, that was being radically altered and that in turn would alter the way he perceived the world; that it would not alter the *creedal substance* of his doctrine of creation but *the way in which its logic would be performed.* The ground on which Acosta came to stand was disappearing and reappearing in a new way. His theological vision was formed in the midst of that tradition. (Jennings 2010: 71).

Rather than bringing a distinctive culture shaped by Christ, Acosta brought the reverse: a Christ distinctly shaped by European tradition, its geopolitics, economic systems and motivations, and forms of government.

The contributions of the European adventurers were the wet cement that set the Church's trajectory away from the biblical story of the people of God as a multi-ethnic, set-apart people equal at the foot of the cross and around the throne of grace:

> At this time, Christian identity held that, because it had jettisoned Israel from its calculus of the formation of Christian life, created a conceptual vacuum that was filled by the European qua European; rather the very process of becoming Christian took on new ontic markers. Those markers of being were aesthetic and racial. This was not a straightforward matter of replacement (European for Jew) but, as I have suggested, of displacement and now theological reconfiguration. European Christians reconfigured the vision of God's attention and love for Israel, that is, they reconfigured a vision of Israel's election. If Israel had been the visibly elect of God, then that visibility in the European imagination migrated without return to a new home shaped now by new visual markers. If Israel's election had been the compass around which Christian identity gained its bearings and found its trajectory, now with this reconfiguration the body of the European would be the compass marking divine election. More importantly, that new elected body, the white body, would be a discerning body, able to detect holy effects and saving grace. Valignano performs this new reconfigured vision of election precisely in the discernment of racial being (Jennings 2010: 33-34).

Jennings points us to Valignano's notations in his 1580 *Sumario,* assessing the viability of a Christian mission to Japan. C.R. Boxer writes of the earliest dividing of all flesh made in the image of God into a racialised, superior vs. inferior existence:

> There is this difference between the Indian and Japanese Christians, which in itself proves that there is really no room for comparison between them, for each one of the former was converted from some individual ulterior motive, and since they are blacks, and of small sense, they are subsequently very difficult to improve and turn into good Christians; whereas the Japanese usually became converted, not on some whimsical individual ulterior move (since it is their suzerains who expect to benefit thereby and not they themselves) but only in obedience to their lord's command; and since they are white and of good understanding and behavior, and greatly given to outward show, they readily frequent the churches and sermons, and when they are instructed they become very good Christians (Boxer 1993: 7). [1]

Jennings and Boxer both note that throughout *Sumario*, and other works by Valignano's contemporaries, the use of 'black' as derogatory and inferior was not unusual,

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[1] See also Josef Franz Schütte, *Valiganano's Mission Principles for Japan,* vol. 1, pts. I and II (St Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980).

and that it was not at all strange to hear the Indians, Chinese, or even Japanese referred to as 'niggers.' (Jennings 2010: 32). Francisco Cabral, the Portuguese superior of the mission to Japan (1570-1580) who resisted developing an indigenous clergy, stated that 'the Japanese are Niggers and their customs barbarous' (Boxer 1993: 94). Jennings further clarifies how perceived racial difference affected perceptions of intelligence and Christian leadership capacity in Africa, India, China and Japan:

> The concern was whether the performance of Christian practices was rooted in a saving effect in the individual or was merely a façade covering disingenuous behaviour or impenetrable ignorance. The questions at stake were not only who could become a true Christian, but also who might ascend the heights of Christian identity and become a lay leader, priest, or even possibly a Jesuit brother. Valignano understood himself to be engaged in nothing less than an act of spiritual discernment (Jennings 2010: 32).

Jennings concludes that the central operation at work here is displacement; a displaced Christ and a displaced Chosen, yielding misplaced missiological impulses:

> European Christians reconfigured the vision of God's attention and love for Israel, that is, they reconfigured a vision of Israel's election. If Israel had been the visible elect of God, then that visibility in the European imagination migrated without return to a new home shaped now by new *visual* markers. If Israel's election had been the compass around which Christian identity gained its bearings and found its trajectory, now with this reconfiguration the body of the European would be the compass marking divine election. More importantly, that new elected body, the white body, would be a discerning body, able to detect holy effects and saving grace. Valignano performs this new reconfigured vision of election precisely in the discernment of racial being. (Jennings 2010: 33-34).

Alessandro Valignano's theological work was based on a commonly accepted (Catholic) supersessionist view that replaced the people of Israel with this European expression of the Christian church as the elect. He produced a "Barbarian typology' that makes a hierarchy of those who are closer and further from the kingdom of God based not on the finished work of Christ, but on Eurocentric categories:

> Without Israel as the point of elected stability, the idea of an elected people became an idea without its authentic compass and thereby subject to strange new human discernment. Valignano discerns in two ways—those capable of salvation and those capable of the ministry, priesthood, and ecclesial leadership. At the bottom, chained to the deepest suspicion of incapability, are the conversos (or marranos) and moriscos. Valignano locates Africans with these New Christians and Christian Moors as those he strongly doubts capable of gospel life: 'They are a very untalented race … incapable of grasping our holy religion or practising it; because of their naturally low intelligence they cannot rise above the level of the senses …; they lack any culture and are given to savage ways and vices, and as a consequence they live like brute beasts…. In fine, they are a race born to serve, with no natural aptitude for governing…. But through a just though hidden judgement of God, they are left in that state of impotence and regarded as a sterile reprobate land which gives no hope of yielding fruit for a long time to come' (Jennings, 2010: 34).

Valignano's typology describes the indigenous people of the Americas ('Indians') as reprobates and renders them as nearly beyond the reach of the kingdom of God, based on observations of their racial and ethnic makeup as the 'dusky races' in the New World.

This astounding statement, reflecting on the people of Monomotapa in Mozambique, shows Valignano drawing the logical conclusion of black incapacity—reprobation. Reprobation is not simply the state of existence opposite election; it is also a judgement upon the trajectory of a life, gauging its destiny from what can be known in the moment. Reprobation joins the black body to the Moor body and both to the Jewish body. All are in the sphere of Christian rejection and therefore of divine rejection. At the other end of capability are the Japanese (and possibly the Chinese). the Moor body and both to the Jewish body. All are in the sphere of Christian rejection and therefore of divine rejection (Jennings, 2010: 34).

Jennings charted a similar racial typology developed by Jose de Acosta, exposing the Iberian's self-focused standards of Cain. At the top of their typology, they placed themselves, the ones by whom all others in the new world would be compared; an 'ideal human.' Under Acosta's Iberian gaze, anyone besides Europeans was an 'other,' typified as three classes of Barbarians with values placed on their skill levels of language, writing systems, and government in relation to the systems with which Acosta was most familiar as his standard: his own. The Chinese, Japanese and Eastern Indian people were compared to the reasoning and technological advances of the Greco-Roman cultures and were considered higher or more developed than those with more elementary writing and accounting systems who lived under tribal and kinship- oriented rule. These groups' marginal advances proved that they could be Christianised, which in Acosta's view seemed to mean civilised and Europeanised. These could be 'converted' to the European way of living (but not necessarily into the Body of Christ) by assimilation through education. Acosta's third barbarian demographic had no formal writing system, was nomadic, seemed to him to have no 'rule of law' comparable to European structures, and was considered therefore to have no human feelings and to be less than human. Native ritual practice, behaviour and unsophisticated language were, for Acosta, indications of their sub-humanity; their conversion to his European 'Christianity' would necessarily have to be by force. Jennings presents Acosta's typology as one of the 'earliest theological ethnographic visions of the new worlds,' defined by Cainian impulses and driven by Acosta's primary identity as Iberian, rather than an understanding of biblical anthropology (Jennings, 2010: 103).

The Cainian orientation as an institutionalised phenomenon begins here for the New World, setting self-as-god over all creation rather than worshipping the Creator and seeing equal value across humanity. In the covenantal story, when man was given dominion over all creation he was not given dominion over other humans; this would have been domination, not dominion.[2]

To categorise human beings in such a typology, Valignano and Acosta had to consider other humans as subhuman (or nearly human) in some cases, and as beasts in others, based on their proximity to their understanding of white Europeanness as the more perfect standard for the image of God. And yet, Jennings points out that both Acosta and Valignano were simply giving nomenclature to the Church's already accepted ontological categories. These profound theological distortions spread throughout the cultures of Christian Spain and Portugal, as well as through other parts of mediaeval Europe. They developed a process of 'discerning Christian identity that, because it had jettisoned Israel from its calculus of the formation of Christian life, created a conceptual vacuum that was filled by the European' (Jennings 2010: 33).

While Jennings focuses on the racial aspects of Valignano's theological and anthropological failings, the issue I wish to bring out is the explorer's profound deviation from the covenantal story of the people of God. Narrative theology assumes that where the story ends for the Christian community determines whether the narrative is truthful (Hauerwas 1981). Valignano's typology and misconstrued anthropology is unable to produce a people that comports with the inclusivity of Revelation 7:9-10 as a people from every nation, tongue and tribe gathered equally around the throne of God, nor can it produce a story that is in harmony with that of the original people of God expressed at one point in time through a covenantal understanding of biblical Israel that takes into account the Genesis narrative.[3]

The cultural compromises of the Iberian expansion into the New World can be seen as an expression of the same impulse that led to the compromises of the Northern and Southern kingdoms, expressed in a different age through the Papal Bull referred to as the Doctrine of Discovery. Add to this an incomplete cosmology, anthropology, Christology

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[2] Genesis 1:24-31
[3] In chapters one and two, I introduced the St. Thomas Moravians as a community who rejects ethnically-based redefinitions of God's people under a singular ethnic identity, who reject the church's involvement in nation-building, violence, and the dehumanization of others.

and eschatology, and European explorers produce a theology that deviates from the foundational story for several hundred years. It is a story that is sanctioned and defined by the self-exalting legacy of Cain.

Through the Doctrine of Discovery, the Catholic church declared that the God of Christianity granted European adventurers the 'right to claim foreign lands' as they discovered their inhabitants and their resources. Indigenous people had no right of ownership to said land, only the right of occupation (Pope Alexander VI, 1493:1). The Bull attests of itself that it was instituted for the sake of the spread of the Christian faith yet was also committed to acquiring the natural resources of foreign lands and acquisition of the land itself. The penalty for interference with this Papal Bull was the wrath of God himself:

> "Let no one, therefore, infringe, or with rash boldness contravene, this our recommendation, exhortation, requisition, gift, grant, assignment, constitution, deputation, decree, mandate, prohibition, and will. *Should anyone presume to attempt this, be it known to him that he will incur the wrath of Almighty God and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul* (Pope Alexander VI, 1493:1) [*emphasis mine*].

Displacement is often a theologizing experience, for both the displaced and the one who displaces; displacement was in full operation 'within the expansion of worlds' (Jennings 2010: 37). Spain's conflation of the geo-political with the theological, and the ideology of a literal temporal kingdom built through political and cultural expansion, significantly impacted and shifted fundamental perceptions in South America, Africa, India, China, Japan, Australia and the Carib, both for the indigenous and for the adventurer. Missiologist Paul Kollmann likewise points out that during this time of expansion, notions of what was 'European' increasingly became associated with what was considered 'Christian,' and that which was non-European/foreign was increasingly considered 'pagan/other' (Kollman, 2011:429). This justified both missiological and geopolitical impulses around the world; the European Christian became normative for Christianity at large:

> In light of the expansive colonialism begun in the late fifteenth century, *missio's* enunciative performance of subject and object took shape as an evangelical center–periphery relationship epitomized by the European encounter with the Americas, which were increasingly emphasized in the Jesuit understanding of mission. As Ranajit Guha puts it, awareness of the New World created an "occasion for a comprehensive exercise in discrimination" and inaugurated a plenitude of new names, categorizations, and classifications in the centuries that followed. The encounter, which led to conquest as it unfolded, thus had linguistic as well as political aspects. On the one hand, the Americas came to be a space in European consciousness; on the other hand, Europe came to a new sense of itself. The movement into the west allowed Europe to create itself as the center of the world, with the Americas as an archetypal periphery. *Missio* served as one way, therefore, for Europeans to assimilate the inhabitants of the New World, namely as peripheral others who were recipients of mission. Seen in this light, *missio* constitutes one major trope by which Europeans assimilated other peoples, in particular those of the New World, and in so doing re-invented themselves and others within a clearly positioned discourse. The subject-object and spatial distinctions enacted by mission

reinforced other polarities based on time, gender, and race that accompanied Europe's developing self-awareness in relation to others, especially embodied in America (Kollman, 2011: 438).

According to Kollman and Jennings, the Jesuits' missional-evangelical impulses played a significant role in the geopolitics of the New World. Both scholars surmise that despite their best intentions, the Jesuits provided a starting point for a soteriology founded on ethnicity; that is, salvation based on an ontological whiteness and New World misperceptions. Kollman cites James Perkinson, who also strongly suggests that the 'encounter with the Americas served as a crucial transformative moment in the emerging European discourse of race, showing how ontological whiteness developed from earlier Hebrew-European-Christian categories, so that over time it became a dominant soteriological category' (Kollman 2011: 439).

As Perkinson puts it, '. . . racialization organised social differentiation by means of soteriological signification,' and the European encounter with the New World had prepared the way by bringing to consciousness the salvific possibilities for 'savages' (James Perkinson, 2004: 57-60; 2005: 26ff).

Ibram X. Kendi further unpacks the persistence of Cain. As an ideological Antiracist, he locates the infiltration of Catholic Spain's ideals into the early Americas by tracking the intentional pursuit of a Christian civil society based primarily on ethnicity and its crossover into other European societies. He observes that Richard Hakluyt ushered in the British age of adventure, encouraging 'explorers, traders, *and missionaries* to fulfil their superior destiny to civilise, Christianize, capitalise and command the world' (Kendi, 2017: 33). Kahluyt's protegé, and Cambridge graduate John Pory rejected the explanation of the physical differences of indigenous Africans and Americans originally asserted in the Climate Theory of Race,[4] and found a justification for their 'otherness' in the Bible's Ham, thus justifying the inferiority of Blacks in the first appearance of Curse Theory (Kendi, 2017: 31-35).[5]

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[4] According to Kendi, "Aristotle (384 to 322 BCE) concocted a climate theory to justify Greek superiority, saying that extreme hot or cold climates produced intellectually, physically and morally inferior people who were ugly and lacked the capacity for freedom and self-government. By the birth of Christ or the start of the Common Era, Romans were justifying their slaveholding practices using Aristotle's climate theory, and soon the New Christianity began to contribute to these arguments. For early Christian theologians, whom Puritans studied alongside Aristotle – God ordained the human hierarchy." (Kendi, 2017: 17).

[5] Pory's translation of *Geographical Histories of Africa* rejected the long-held Climate Theory, since it could not explain the geographical distinctions in skin colour among men. Pory suggested that the distinctions must be hereditary, and that the Africans were descendants from Ham, the cursed son of Noah (Kendi, 2017: 34).

Kendi falls short in his truncated connection between Aristotle and the Puritans by overlooking the nature of Greek society during the Classical era (476-336 BCE). The Classical Greeks drew lines of humanity between the Hellenes (Greeks) and non-Barbarians (non-Greeks); not along lines of colour or ethnicity. Greeks considered their culture rational and orderly; they alone had produced civil society, and therefore were "more human." The Greek citizen - not necessarily the ethnic Greek - was the standard for full humanity and was considered the 'ideal human.' Barbarians, non-Greeks, women and the poor were regarded with disdain by the elites and seen as social outsiders and therefore less developed humans. Kendi also overlooks the long shadow of slavery in human history that preceded the Greeks and its universal practice. While there was a bloodline aspect in the inheritance of rights when born into Greek society with political or economic power, still all Barbarians (read, non-Greeks) regardless of ethnicity were considered incapable of self-rule, and therefore fit to be enslaved.

In this, the Greco-Roman approach to citizenship or state-based dominance showed little difference from the presumed superiority of the Dahomey tribe that enslaved Magdalena and shipped her to the Americas, as was mentioned in chapters one and two of this thesis. Dehumanising and degrading the Barbarian was a central feature in ancient political thought and practice, well into the Roman Empire. In that same vein, the Romans enslaved anyone who was not Roman elites; Jews, Arabs, Goths, Visigoths. The Barbarian therefore was the "other," classified by elitist-state terms (*the Polis*). To the Greeks and Romans, rationality, civility, and human order were only embodied in Greco-Roman society. This contextual background is what makes the New Testament fulfilment of the *counter-polis*, one new man in Christ from every tongue, tribe, and nation all the more stunning; such a manifestation of the kingdom was an other-political and other-cultural reality on earth, and also manifested in glory. It is here that Kendi begins to construct an ideological Cain cult of his own; by ignoring the larger, covenantal story

and flattening the context to a bald racism alone that extended into (and beyond) the slave trade post-Protestant Reformation.

In Kendi's view, Pory's translated works would contribute to citizenship in many of the new colonies being structured around race. His ideas embedded themselves in legislation, determining citizenship by an ethically defined, pseudo-Christianized hierarchical taxonomy. In some cases, biblical eisegesis determined civic legislation. The burgeoning Protestant Reformation saw some of the effects of this Cainian cultural influence. Its crossover is seen by shifting our focus to the economic influence of the nascent slave trade on broader European culture; yet saturation throughout the ethics of Protestant congregations is uneven and not total, as Kendi, Jennings, and other ideological Antiracists might suggest.

This makes the St. Thomas community even more striking, in their social positioning as an 'other-cultural' and 'other-political' reality among hostile Cainian entities in their unique handling of the emancipation issue, their impact on domestic issues in arguing for the sanctity of Christian marriages among the enslaved and free people of colour, and even in their prioritisation of such social concerns and confidence in the advance of Christ's kingdom as the remedy for social ills.

John McWhorter's humanistic scepticism toward all faith systems brings helpful clarity in analysing Kendi and Jenning's Third Wave Antiracism. He notes it has developed a religious zeal and a cultural and political system typical of religious fundamentalism, whether it's expressed in the extreme or in softer forms. Just as I've discussed how the biblical sacraments were co-opted and distorted by the Amina tribesmen and the *Bläncken* of St. Thomas, McWhorter's observations of modern Antiracism point to a similar religious fervour typical of Cain's legacy. Antiracism, in McWhorter's view, comes complete with resentment against transformative biblical Christianity, a suspension of rationality, submission to cultural powers signifying identity and inclusion, ritual gestures that indicate compliance, and a distinct and powerful clergy. It also includes rituals requiring whites to "acknowledge" their privilege in perpetual penance, yet since their original sin is ontological, the stain of their racism can never be absolved. The ideology's mission, as well as the central moral duty of its adherents, is to battle racism and the racist until a judgement day when America reckons with and atones for its racism. McWhorter concludes that Antiracism 'is a religious faith with a creation myth: that all of today's problems with race trace to the first Africans being brought to our shores in 1619, and the Revolutionary War was fought because Britain was moving

toward abolishing slavery, despite leading historians noting the inaccuracy of the historical premise.' (McWhorter 2022: 25-57). Following Cain, there is hostility and violence toward Antiracism's perceived 'heretics' defined as any who would disagree, but especially toward those who are oriented with differently defined terms for life, anthropology, and eternity:

> The Elect consider it imperative to not only critique those who disagree with their creed, but to seek their punishment and elimination to whatever degree real-life conditions can accommodate. There is an overriding sense that unbelievers must be not just spoken out against, but called out, isolated, and banned (McWhorter 2022: 43-44).

Kendi's deviations from a covenantal understanding of the ancient story will be discussed further in chapter seven of this thesis. However, this review of misunderstanding and misappropriation of vital elements of a covenantal understanding reveals the danger of replacing one Cainian pattern with another, even as one seeks to expose and correct the abuses of the past. These deviations are important for connecting a Cain and Abel dynamic to the Christian endurance of the St. Thomas Moravians, and to persecution in modern context; these implications will be further discussed in chapter seven.

For now, it's important to note that other voices have acknowledged the same social ills produced by Cain's legacy in the Americas, without developing Cainian orientations of their own. One such scholar is Stephen Keillor, to whom I now turn.

4.3   Cain as a Profiteering Adventurer

In the previous section, I made use of primary source materials uncovered by Antiracist scholars who identify as Christian to make a distinction between the aberrant forms of Christianity that defined the colonisation of the early Americas. Based on the evidence, I believe it is right to classify these historical cases as Cainian communities by this thesis' definition, as shaped by Augustine's binary premise: religious institutions bearing the name of Christ for temporal mission and political and cultural gain, contra Christ's *other-political* and *other-cultural* kingdom mission. Scholarship outside of the Antiracist ideology points to other factors besides race for the failures and excesses of church and culture of the New World.

In *This Rebellious House,* Steven Keillor argues for an assessment of 'the Colombian Catholic/Christian encounter that doesn't compromise the story of Christianity' (Keillor 2006: 34). Keillor resists the idea that the moral failures of the colonists were due solely to race, Christianity, and the church's intentions for global

dominance, calling 'single-cause assertions' largely correct, but oversimplified. Keillor posits that ethical failures and theological aberrations were due to a *rebellion* against genuine Christianity. He cites the influence of economic progress and new opportunities that developed in the form of amoral capitalism. He does not excuse the impact of economics and greed on Christianity, or its exploitation thereof, but rather shows the weak points where it infiltrated the church from the surrounding culture. By taking this approach, he argues for a righteous remnant of genuine Christian believers who followed the path of Abel and the prophets, who did not 'bend the knee to Baal.' Keillor writes that at the time of the nascent trans-Atlantic slave trade, earning interest and buying slaves (both marks of the expanding trade of all goods into the Americas) were practices that were condemned by Protestant churches. (Keillor 2006: 34).

Keillor offers an alternate explanation for how the Christian mission became misdirected. His accounting of the ecclesial events that led up to the eighteenth century's context of colonial conquest was relevant to this research in that acknowledges the brutality of Europe's colonisation and world domination and the Christian church's complicity, yet does not write off a traditional understanding of Christianity as solely at fault. Keillor affirms the depths of man's depravity and captures the Cain and Abel dynamic:

> … running through Old and New Testaments is the stark reality that human rebellion produces a split between those who falsely claim to be his people and those who truly are his people. The latter characteristically obey him, but sometimes they rebel too (Keillor 2006: 20).

Framing Europe's overall spiritual condition as an ongoing state of rebellion, Keillor describes the relationship between church and culture as a continuing argument against God, an argument that Europe brought with it into the New World. He largely agrees with the unfavourable picture of the fifteenth-century European church, yet stresses that the church's involvement in government, finance, and politics – particularly the monetising of indulgences – set up the surrounding culture for greed to drive the common man's newfound access to wealth building through the New World. The fifteenth-century Catholic Church's primary fault lay in institutionalising the people's hunger for profit. The feudal system set up the religious elite as landlords and generated a forced loyalty to local 'deities' created by the Church based on their authority to grant lands to favoured subjects. The relic trade was extremely lucrative for the church, and church offices under Pope Leo X were sold yearly for five hundred thousand

ducats. This enabled the higher church officers to assign lesser deputies to perform their priestly tasks, while they pocketed the difference.

These funds supported immoral lifestyles, particularly the mistresses of the religious elites, and set a foundation for the Pope and church to both seek political power. At the same time, parishioners were taught to put place ultimate trust in festivals, talismans, accumulated wealth, temporal kings and superstitions. All of this created a Catholic Christianity throughout mediaeval Europe that Dutch theologians van Herwaarden and de Keyser called 'a religious consciousness that can hardly be called Christian' (Van Engen 1986: 520). When kings expanded their own powers to create nation-states with the divine sanction of the church, the foundation had already been laid to use economic motives to bind any willing subject to their desired cause.

At this point, usury (loans with interest) and slavery (which was steadily becoming a significant portion of the trade economy, buttressing expansion into the New World) were still largely condemned by the dictates of the Catholic church. There was no serious discipline for participation. Keillor labels this the central tension in 'Europe's ongoing argument with God;' the war between the burgeoning amoral capitalism and the abandoned values and practices of the church (Keillor 2006: 20), much in the pattern of biblical Israel and Judah.

Keillor notes that Europe's culture at the time was far too complex to indict *all* of Europe or *all* of the Church of a predominant and unified impulse to exploit the Americas via racial supremacy, yet he still allows that attempts to use biblical Christianity to support nation building were a misuse of Christianity's purpose. Keillor paints a picture of a mediaeval Europe made up of competing 'states, language groups, cities and classes, all of which made for dynamism and discord, with two conflicting cultural roots – Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian' (Keillor 2006: 21). This conflict in worldviews caused a unique cultural instability, with its pragmatic Greco-Roman roots set in rebellion against the values, virtues and ethics extolled by Christianity:

> Rather than being pious followers, God's dutiful schoolchildren living to teach others of him, they were often in active rebellion against the God they professed to obey. Their religion was not an integrated, harmonious human-centred belief system but a traveling argument between their God and them… to be sure, a common Christianity caused cultural similarities throughout Europe and between the linked realms of church, economy and state. But rebellion against the Christian God caused similarities to fall short of integration (Keillor 2006:20-21).

In other words, much like Augustine's Rome or like Israel and Judah. Rebellious colonisers increasingly perverted Christianity into a role for which it was never intended: temporal nation-building and power acquisition. Keillor observes that to use Christianity

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for a human purpose such as integrating a culture, a polity, or even an economy, is a misinterpretation of its mission at best, and a misappropriation of its mission at worst. In the ideal situation, a society permeated by 'total obedience' to God where theft of land and person is condemned yet holds to a God-ordained right of rulers to rule and conquer, should find itself controlled by a more powerful impulse – knowledge of God.' However, in this society which found itself in rebellion against God, the regulating knowledge of God gave way to rampant avarice, selfish ambition, and licentiousness; thus, 'Medieval Europeans attempted to integrate their society around a popular lay religiosity and a bureaucratic church, but they failed to restrain individual self-seeking. Their religious-political-economic mix satisfied many people's interests, but it did not make for a harmonious integrated society' (Keillor 2006:21). Further, it spelt disaster for the indigenous nation-states across the Americas, and for the alternative witness of the true Church.

In Spain, the cultural disorder as the church was developing notions of exploration in the New World is of note. David Stannard bluntly refers to Spain as a 'land of violence, squalor, treachery and intolerance … no different than the rest of Europe' (Stannard 1992: 57). Tzvetan Todorov affirms these assessments of Europe's disarray, claiming that the 'Spaniards' God is an *auxiliary* rather than a *Lord*, a being used rather than enjoyed.' The conquerors' self-proclaimed goal was to advance their religion, but rather they used their religion to abuse and conquer, to assert and expand land and power (Todorov 1984: 107-8). This 'mission' of nation-building, covered with the thinnest Christian veneer, adapted and morphed through successive generations. The Spanish conquistadors were notorious, and 'wore their religion like a sword.'

Keillor notes that well into the Renaissance period, Europeans used an amoral version of capitalism to infiltrate societies which resisted being 'integrated through politics or religion. They were the priests of the self-interested religion of ambition and avarice.' As Keillor tragically surmises:

> Renaissance Europeans [who followed the Dark Ages] did not invent rebellion against God. They only tried to justify and regularize it, then build a society around it … Starting in 1492, many of these limitless, innovative, individualistic self-seekers … tumbled out of their homelands to reveal what was really in their hearts. The sight was not a pretty one … as if the seven deadly sins had escaped Europe, taken to horseback, and galloped across America (Keillor 2006: 26).

Jennings, Kendi, and Keillor seem to agree that both an ethnocentric Christianity, and some amoral form of capitalistic greed, gave birth to the push into the New World; they differ to what degree each was responsible for the resulting idolatrous churches and inhumanities they produced. In our modern age, we discover an uncomfortable

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Truth: Christian evangelism was used to justify abominable practices. Cortés' forces followed suit, massacring the Aztecs under the guise of religion but admitting that religion merely gave them courage for their own self-seeking commercial conquests, and that this was his cry: 'Let us go forth, serving God, honouring our nation, giving growth to our king, *and let us become rich ourselves*' (Rivera 1992: 262). Some Elizabethan English explorers adopted the perverse missional ways of the Spaniards. As Europe's common man pressed into the New World, liberated from poverty by ambition and possibility, he at last could escape the already loosened constraints on self-interest and profit beyond the reach of the king or his feudal lord. Such a man could finally break free from the material poverty of generational serfdom, only to look away from the enslavement and poverty of others unlike him.

Through these adventurers, the larger Catholic church's cultural accommodations bled over into some cultural descendants of the Protestant Reformation. As the Protestant adventurers expressed and profited on this unconstrained view, the church's participation or silence regarding the slave trade in New England, the nascent British colonies, and the East and West Indies allowed the dehumanizing aspects of the trade to flourish.[6]

Keillor concludes that the Spanish brought to the Americas amoral capitalist devices, and that the resulting plantations throughout the Americas were, indeed, 'economic conquest institutionalised' (Keillor 2006: 26). Segments of the church fell prey to apathy toward amoral practices as a result, which resulted from the failure of religion or the state to integrate and control the general depravity of European society. In chapters one and two, I explored the impact of this morally rudderless European culture on Denmark, the island church culture of St. Thomas, its 'religious' plantocracy, the island's indigenous people, its ethical Europeans, and the imported Gold Coast Africans throughout St. Thomas Island, as the Danes colonised and produced its unique environment.

4.4   Summary

Whether driven primarily by economics or by ecclesial and geo-political interests, the case can be made that Cain's legacy dominated Europe's culture and drove Its economics.

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[6] The Quakers, some Reformed sects, and select Moravians later rose up with Abel's prophetic voice against the dehumanising trade with a vigorous anti-slavery movement.

These dynamics propelled opportunistic colonisers into carving up the early Americas for their own interests, while exploiting fellow humans along the way. This strongly echoes Israel's pattern of degeneration, against which Keillor and others claim no Church movement is immune. In the environment of the New World expansion, the marks of a faithful Church (understood as the preaching of the Word, baptism, Lord's supper, and church discipline) had lost both meaning and relevance.[7] More central to this research, the marks of the church lost the ability to remind the broader Church of the story in which they were involved, and that their central mission was to reveal a kingdom nation and government that harmonised and dignified *all* nations, women, and men, where the government rests on Christ's shoulders; not merely build a temporal national government commanded and directed by men.[8]

The previous chapter's discussion of the prophets' continual warnings to Israel and Judah reveals the depth to which compromise and syncretism are a scandal to the heart of God. As it was for Israel and Judah, the prophetic voice of an 'other-cultural' reality centred on kingdom principles was present amid Europe's push into the Americas, albeit far less amplified than Cain's. For early eighteenth-century Moravians, it took shape in the form of the Philadelphian Ideals.

To briefly recap the ideals: (1) rediscovering the simplicity and sacrifice of the New Testament Church coupled with a pious desire that ethics and epistemology matched, individually and communally; (2) denominational proscribed doctrine was deemphasized to avoid divisions, and an emphasis on the universal or invisible church was raised; (3) evidence of an awakening to the purpose and life of Christ, an awakening that would produce a genuinely transformed life away from destruction and toward obedience that produced life for self and others; (4) intense focus on the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ; (5) in home worship that featured raising of lay leadership;

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[7] 'The marks by which the true Church is known are these: If the pure doctrine of the gospel is *preached* therein; if it maintains the *pure administration of the sacraments* as instituted by Christ; if *church discipline* is exercised in punishing sin' (Belgic Confession, Article 29). Conversely, and similarly contrasting attributes of Abel with Cain, the Belgic Confession also lists the marks of the false church: 'As for the false Church, it ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does it administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in His Word, but adds to and takes from, as it thinks proper; it relies more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God and rebuke it for its errors, covetousness, and idolatry.' (BC, Art. 29).

[8] For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' (Isaiah 9:6, ESV)

(6) a commitment to non-separatism from previous denominations; (6) affirmation of the historical persistence of the true Church universal, that individuals within corrupt institutions could remain in a state of faithfulness; a return to the priority and practice of communal prayer.

These became the communal marks that set the Moravians apart from all other cultures on the island, a recipe for their own prophetic alternative witness that both indicted and invited their island neighbours. The next chapter will turn to various expressions of the Cain and Abel dynamic in the Moravians' historical moment, and the complications and solutions the dynamic brought to in developing a theologically based ethnohistorical approach to understanding Oldendorp's records.

Chapter 5: A Theological Approach to Ethnohistory

5.   CHAPTER 5: THEOLOGY AND ETHNOHISTORY

The Oldendorp mission record is arguably one of the largest collections of primary source materials detailing the Moravians' pioneering mission work in the Caribbean. Christian Georg Andreas Oldendorp meticulously presented a Christian community enduring religious persecution amid the brutal and violent slave trade, complete with anti-emancipation laws for converts, a culture of pro-conversion but anti-church membership, sacrament denial, miscegenation laws, antiliteracy campaigns, perceived ontological inferiority, and denominational marginalisation. This chapter of the thesis aims to accomplish three goals: (1) explore a qualitative theological-ethnohistorical approach to the extensive primary source materials of the St. Thomas Moravians that preserved interviews, personal letters, and diarised details of their experiences; (2) introduce the context surrounding the development of C. G. A. Oldendorp's missionary documents and (3) discuss the controversies surrounding the two existing editions of his document, in preparation for a close reading of Oldendorp's documents.

5.1   Ethnohistory Serves Theology

In the previous chapter, I examined a few of the dominant theological forces in the Americas that re-shaped biblical Christology and anthropology according to ethnic and economic terms. Building on Augustine's Cain and Abel premise as applied to Rome, I identified the first of these two dominant streams as 'Cain the militant coloniser,' after the the geo-political, cultural Christ-idol made in the Iberian (or European) image. The second was 'Cain the profiteering adventurer,' after the image of the New World adventurer exploiting developing economic systems and human beings in the process.> Each became gods over their own private realms, determining the fates of others who lived at the mercy of these overlords. Each re-configures the divine Trinitarian consultation of Genesis 1 and 2: God consenting 'Let us make man in our image,' adapted to man proclaiming, 'Let us make God in our image.'

In chapter one, Christ as Covenant-Maker who is 'keeping a set apart people for himself' was discussed. In the covenantal approach, Christ has regard and purpose for men and women from all nations. The story finds its fulfilment at the ingathering of all

nations, tribes and tongues (Revelation 7:9). Unlike Cain the militant coloniser or profiteering adventurer, the Christ of the covenantal story finds redemptive value and strength in a lack of human power, dominance and its pursuit, and so do his people. I argued for the presence of this ethical counter-polis on St. Thomas Island based on the work of Wells, Hauerwas and Roberts (postliberal narrative approach), Vanhoozer (covenantal story), Bartholomew and Goheen (drama of Scripture), defining the story of this counter-polis.

As mentioned previously, in his essay *Ethnography-As-Theology: Inscribing the African American Story,* Theophus Smith lends credence to the value of theological spadework as a prelude to ethnographic study for communities in the African diaspora:

> Ethnography-as-theology explores the role of the theologian as a kind of ethnographer (Lindbek, Schreiter), and draws the implications of that role for the ongoing evolution of black theology as a still developing discipline… the ethnographer's performance of describing and "inscribing" culture (Geertz), or "writing culture" (Clifford) cooperates with the narrative theologian's distinctive craft: to inscribe the sacred story that grounds and shapes a community's convictional character, moral practices, and social-religious constructions. Here, ethnography-as-theology means ethnography as a correlative discipline in the task of charting the religious depth and dimensions of a people's storied universe. (Hauerwas, Murphy, Nation, 1994: 117-118).

Smith argues that a faithful telling of the story necessitates a proper theological foundation. The traditional covenantal approach offers such a foundation: its covenantal approach to story offers a coherence from Genesis to Revelation, establishing the story of an equal and global people created, set apart, kept, preserved, and gathered to God through the active, promised, and finished work of Christ the Creator. The post-liberal narrative helpfully emphasises the ethical and social aspects of the story in virtue, habit formation, and communal practice. Though they disagree on other points, the covenantal and narrative approaches meet in the story's telos: where the story ends for the Christian community determines whether a narrative is truthful (Hauerwas, 1983: 94). The covenantal story of Christ ends at a transcendent consummation, expressed in Revelation 7:9 and Revelation 21, the fulfilment of the covenantal promise, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people:'

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and *they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God* (Revelation 21:1-3, emphasis mine).

5.2   A Story-Based Theory of Communal Transformation

Chapter one explored the biblical concept that God has made human beings as a storied people, beginning in Genesis 1-3 and culminating in Revelation 7:9 and Revelation 21.

The Garden Story of Genesis 1-3 is instructive: the human tendency has always been to reframe the covenantal kingdom story on our own terms, and according to humanity's individualized, temporal identity. Genesis 1-3 explains this impulse: humankind is naturally predisposed to curve inward rather than outward or upward to understand the world and develop a set of ethics. Augustine, Luther, and Barth define this impulse as *homo in curvatus in se*. Matthew Jenson describes *in curvatus in se* from these three theologians generally as 'living within a falsehood … developed first and foremost by broken relationships in which people live for themselves rather than for God and others' (Jenson 2006: 131).

The Genesis account also offers a consistent biblical anthropology as foundational to the covenantal story. It reveals that (1) an original people was created for the good pleasure of the Creator; (2) that this Creator conferred dignity, identity, significance, and relational wholeness on humankind as a reflection of the image of God; (3) that humankind marred (but did not absolutely destroy) this conferred dignity, identity and significance.

The only Person in history to 'live Christianity' with absolute perfection was Jesus Christ, who is the Subject, Theme, and Fulfilment of the Christian life. His Holy Spirit still empowers his people through history to follow his pattern of life, death, resurrection, and consummation (WCF VIII, pp 28-34). Though the post-liberal narrative approach to theology holds a different foundation from covenantal theology, its idea of the *communio sanctorum*, or communion of the saints, is helpful to introduce the people of God as a past historical community, and a present and future reality. The concept helps thinking of the ongoing church community as an organism embodying a storied beginning, middle and end (Hauerwas, 1983: 94). The St. Thomas community's understanding of Christology, anthropology, and their habits and virtues, comes under consideration through this premise of a truthful narrative and community of saints living this embodied Christology (his life, mission, death, resurrection). In the first chapter, I argued for an ethical counter-polis based on the work of Wells, Hauerwas and Roberts. Vanhoozer, Bartholomew, and Goheen help define the story of that counter-polis. This research is concerned with how the story-based covenantal view and the narrative approach both reveal aspects of communal virtue development derived from 'following a truthful narrative' (Wells 1995: 72-73); the truthfulness of a narrative is defined by how it conforms to one true story (Hauerwas, 1983: 94).

Universalist Jacques Ellul likewise observed that 'not even clergy or religious

institutions are immune, and those who fall under their sway are 'enslaved by the world,' belonging to it as 'slaves of political, economic, and intellectual forces.' Ellul noted that a primary function of the church was to 'proclaim and to bring those who follow false narratives to freedom; if she is an agent of those forces, and shares in them herself,' and cannot be a witness. Religious institutions and clergy would always struggle against becoming 'one of the powers of the world' (Ellul 1972: 39).[1] Reformed theologians Kelly Kapic and Brian Fikkert argue that the only remedy for false gods and their stories is a return to the story of the kingdom of God, where a different culture exists based on faithful stewardship of people and communities who are being made whole through Jesus Christ. Stories, practices, and systems change the character of the practising individuals either toward the image of the one true God or into the image of a false god (Fikkert and Kapic 2019: 51-67). While covenantal theology and narrative theology may differ at other points, in this place the storied, covenant-based theory of change may meet the storied, narrative approach, with a resulting story based on a joining of ethics and epistemology that creates an 'other- cultural' community that cuts across and indicts all other false narratives it encounters. The covenantal expression unfolds in a narratival way, advancing and confirming a consistent story through the actions of its main participants: God and man.

The covenantal promise was written on the hearts of both Cain and Abel. They knew from their parents' lives what doxological obedience and disobedience meant, and what Yahweh required of them. Because the covenant was kept and fulfilled by Christ, the people of God could delight in keeping and submitting to his ways.

To use the language of the early narrative theologians to complement covenantal concepts then, the ancient covenantal story of the Bible is a truthful narrative. Defining that narrative is the covenantal promise made at the creation of man: 'I will be your God, and you will be my people,' and the narrative of the promise is the life, death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ. His life, and the faithful believer's life, is method, fulfilment, and content of the covenantal promise.

[1] Ellul identified as a universalist and would not have taken a covenantal position or an 'elect people of God,' yet he still upholds this Biblical principle that idolatry leads to spiritual slavery, destruction, and to the destruction of neighbour (Ellul 1989: 188).
[2] Jeremiah 31:33, Romans 2:12-16, Matthew 22:37.

Having argued that the covenantal story constitutes a truthful narrative, this chapter continues to explore the Cain and Abel legacy among the competing narratives of the eighteenth- century Americas. Through the qualitative primary source material for this research, it now considers whether false interpretations of Christ created pale imitations of Christianity in the Moravian documents. The research uncovered influence over the ethnohistorical approach for this thesis, with institutions and individuals at times failing to reflect the covenantal story.

5.3   Encountering Cain and Abel in Oldendorp's Documents

There are two existing editions of Oldendorp's diaries, with differences significant enough to cause controversy and necessitate arguing for the integrity of Oldendorp's primary source data. It's important to understand how competing eighteenth-century narratives around Christology, race, and ethnicity (anthropology), and the character of the people of God impacted not only Oldendorp's writing, but also the preservation of his documents by his Moravian leadership. Here too, the Cain and Abel dynamic is on display, significantly impacting the context in which the records were kept.

Postmodern and Antiracist scholars in the twenty-first century have called into question the integrity of European missionary diaries for ethnohistorical research. Yet for much of the twentieth century, mission documents were seen as holding valuable insight into the beliefs and practices of indigenous populations that quantitative data could not capture. Missionaries sometimes had more personalised access than documentary evidence from legal papers, government manuscripts, newspaper publications, maps, etc. They have been considered helpful in reconstructing community, cultural, ethnic, and social histories (Wiedman 1986: vii-xiii). This certainly seems to be the case for Oldendorp, whose proximity and theological convictions brought him into ethical conflict with the role of Christianity in the slave trade, and its effects on the converts of St. Thomas.

Wiedman and Whiteman advise addressing head-on any potential implicit and explicit bias inherent in European missionaries; the question to be asked in approaching missionary documents is not 'Is it biased,' but rather, '*What* is its bias?' Of course, the question naturally assumes the obvious: every document has biases that come from the person who created it (Tippett 2013: 3-4). Wiedman advises that 'the wholeness of the document be understood, the context out of which it was created and the configurational whole of which it is a part' (Weidman 1986: xiii). Since the keys to the value of

empirical documents lie in using each correctly and critically, some background on Oldendorp's manuscript is necessary for proper use. The first step in using Oldendorp is understanding his context; he, too, has a story to tell.

5.4 Oldendorp in a Pro-Slavery, Racialised Context

For two years, Oldendorp had access to the resident missionaries and their converts who witnessed the dynamic process of acculturation and change. I'll first consider Oldendorp's ethical bias as it relates to the theoretical premise of proximity to the ancient story or a truthful narrative. Then I will consider his theological and anthropological biases, and those of the denominational leaders who edited his 3000-page volume. Lastly, I will discuss the other primary source documents to which I turned to further explore the events found in Oldendorp's reports.

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of exploration in the Americas, the Moravians made significant contributions to the developing genre of ethnography. Christian Feest points out Oldendorp's diaries on Moravian mission activity constitute an important body of early proto-ethnographic writing. These kinds of detailed mission reports led to the birth of ethnography as a particular field of discourse, combining early scientific Renaissance genres of *historia* and *scientia* with the Moravian concept of diarising as a spiritual exercise (Roeber 2008: 19-30).

Early travel literature gave way to a methodology that distinguished mere data recording from something more akin to diarising, or recording how one felt about what one was observing. This represented a shaping of approaches by more ancient authors into categories that would shape the *apodemic* literary genre that deals with the art of travelling. Literary historian Justin Stagl observes that during this period, separating description from narration was introduced. This allowed the traveller to move from mere observation to recording personal responses to what was witnessed. The opportunity to opine introduced biases and one's own personal experience and culture became the comparative standard for understanding unexplored worlds.

The previous chapter discussed at length the earliest Iberian adventurers, their travel diaries, and their effect on the theological understanding of future chroniclers throughout the Americas. I highlighted Jennings and Macintyre's views of Zurara's Barbarian Typology, its effects on de Acosta, and the 'significant epistemological crisis in the history of Christian theology' he ushered in, yielding the first incidences of colonialist gaze (Jennings 2010: 70, MacIntyre 1998: 354). Jennings outlines the devastating effects

of Zurara's assumptions, shaping various Christian and human identities based on racial qualities. I integrated these biases into the storied theoretical premise, and introduced them as a marker of the false narrative of Cain the militant coloniser, placing it in opposition to the truthful story of Christ.

As Feest outlines how we define the 'other' by our own standard, we see *in curvatus in se* influencing ethnography, the error of re-making man in man's image:

> The problem with categorical generalization is obviously that the categories chosen may not really be adequate to describe cultural otherness, but rather tend to assimilate the Other to or contrast it with the Self. This problem, however, also affects the exploration narrative, which equally has to make use of culturally constituted concepts for merely descriptive purposes. Thus, the distinction between the empirical and generalization should not be seen as reflecting the difference between facts and assumptions, because the description of "facts" is equally based upon concepts existing prior to observation. (Feest 2008: 21)

As we've already seen through Jennings, the Jesuits adventured into the Americas believing 'that which was European was Christian, and that which was non-European was heathen' (Jennings 2010: 25-26, 71).

By the seventeenth century, a distinction between what Gordon Sayre calls the 'exploration narrative' and 'ethnography' was fully developed, even if it was not named as such until later (Sayre 1997: 79-143). The meticulous missionary reports produced by Oldendorp represent various facets of the ragged journey to define the new genre: part explorative narrative; part traveller's diary; part scientific categorisation of geography, topography, flora and fauna; part anthropological record of the habits, customs, languages, class and governmental structures of various populations; and a heavy dose of the spiritual exercise of diarising not as an uninvolved observer, but, in Oldendorp's case, as a pietist who became quite emotionally involved. His first-hand exposure to the miserable system of slavery and plantation life brought him into deep theological and ethical conflict.

5.5   Oldendorp as a Proto-Ethnographer

Oldendorp was commissioned by Count von Zinzendorf, then leader of the Moravian movement, to document the history of the entire Moravian Caribbean initiative. He eventually produced 3000 hand-printed pages in his voluminous original manuscript, which was recently made available in the original German in 2002. It offers Oldendorp's unredacted first-hand account of observations, interviews, and interactions with all the populations on St. Thomas Island.

Oldendorp gives vibrant descriptions of the island's topography and natural history. He details observations of the cultural customs, habits, priorities, and attitudes of the white (*Bläncken*) islanders, the free people of colour, the Black inhabitants of the islands who represented the enslaved population, and finally the African and German Moravian Christian population. He gives particular attention to the details of the customs, languages, and relationships from the original Gold Coast region from which the African population was stolen, and a significant feature of Oldendorp's meticulous records is his focus on the vices and virtues of each community. Granted, this is filtered through his Moravian pietism, however to highlight virtues, vices, and community development in ethnography was unique to Oldendorp (Feest 2008: 25-26). He may well have been the first to introduce this feature, albeit tinged with his own European and Moravian assumptions.

It is noteworthy that Oldendorp worked from a different theological conviction and orientation than his denominational leadership; self-referential 'othering' would bleed far less into his mission reports than the Jesuits, discussed in chapter two, who preceded him. This orientation resulted from Oldendorp's radicalisation into the anti-slavery position that affirmed a genuine biblical anthropology that stressed human equality. This is a significant part of a truthful narrative that envisions human equality at creation, at the cross, and in consummation. Van Gent asserts that Oldendorp's shift away from a doctrine that was comfortable with proslavery occurred as he spent time with influential Quakers in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. He had travelled from Herrnhut to their mission outpost prior to his arrival at St. Thomas, with profound effect.

In her discussion of the role of emotions in Oldendorp's mission ethnography, Van Gent observes that the biblical anthropology he embraced among the Quakers stood in stark relief against the accepted teaching of the Moravian Herrnhuters in Germany. Before St. Thomas, Oldendorp spent time with anti-slavery Quakers Benezet and Woolman at the mission outpost in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. Here, he was exposed to ethics and epistemology much closer to the Covenantal story ideal and the Philadelphian Ideals. Woolman wrote:

> How many Thousands of our harmless Fellow Creatures have, for a long Course of Years, fallen a Sacrifice to that selfish Avarice, which gives Life to this complicated Wickedness. The Iniquity of being engaged in a Trade, by which so great a Number of *innocent People* are yearly destroyed, in an untimely and miserable Manner, is greatly aggravated from the Consideration that we, as a People, have been peculiarly favoured with the Light of the Gospel , that Revelation of Divine Love, which the Angels introduced to the World, by a Declaration of *Peace on Earth, and Good Will to Men – of every Nation, Kindred Tongue and People.* How miserable must be our Condition, if, for filthy Lucre, we would continue to act so contrary to the Nature of this Divine Call, the Purpose of which is to introduce an universal and affectionate Brotherhood in the whole human Species - by

removing from the Heart of every Individual, who submits to its Operation, the Darkness and Corruption of Nature, and transforming the selfish, wrathful, proud Spirit, into Meekness, Parity and Love: For this End the Son of GOD became Man, suffered, and died and the whole Tenor of the Gospel declares, that for those who refuse, or neglect the Offers of this great Salvation, the Son of GOD has suffered in vain (Woolman 1754: 4-5).

Woolman brought to his generation the idea that even the Church can fall under the sway of a false and destructive narrative, persuaded more by culture than by the story of the people of God:

Covetousness and Pride have introduced many iniquitous Practices into civil Society, which tho' odious in themselves, and most pernicious in their Consequences, yet being calculated to gratify our favorite Passions, have been adopted thro' Custom, and enforced so strongly by Example, as to become familiar to us-, so that by Degrees we silence the Dictates of Conscience, and reconcile ourselves to such Things as would, when first proposed to our unprejudiced Minds have struck us with Amazement and Horror, A lamentable and shocking Instance of the Influence which the Love of Gain has upon the Minds of those who yield to its Allurements, even when contrary to the Dictates of Reason, and the common Feelings of Humanity, appears in the Prosecution of the Negro 'Trade, in which the English Nation has long been deeply concerned, and some in this Province have lately engaged (Woolman 1754: 4).

In 1762, the Quaker Anthony Benezet published these words which provocatively re-named the *slave-trade* to the *Man-trade:*

The African Blacks are as properly and truly Men, as the European Whites; they are both of the same Species, and are originally descendents [sic] from the same Parents, they have the same rational Powers as we have , they are free moral Agents, as we are, and many of them have as good natural Genius, as good and as brave a Spirit as any of those to whom they are made Slaves. To trade in Blacks, then, is to trade in Men black- skin'd and the white- skin'd being all of the same Species, all of the human Race, are by Nature upon an Equality, one Man in a State of Nature, as we are with Respect to the Inhabitants of Guiney, and they with Respect to us, is not superior to another Man, nor has any Authority or Dominion over him, or any Right to lay his Commands upon him : He that made us, made them, and all of the same Clay : We are all the Workmanship of his Hands … (Benezet 1762 :38-40).

Van Gent observes that Oldendorp imitated this same humble posture in recording the humanity of Africans: 'he does not over-sensationalize the violent nature of practices' such as warfare, cannibalism, sorcery, and witchcraft among the island groups (Oldendorp, 2000-02: Vol. 3, 383-4; Van Gent 2019: 32). And yet when it comes to the unredeemed African's depravity, Oldendorp is honest about their 'sexual immorality, insuperable obstinacy, cruelty toward subordinates and propensity for deceitfulness' – he states this just as boldly as he states that 'the Africans were innately no worse than the *Blänken*, or the Whites.' (Ahlbäck 2016: 204).

The Quakers' effect on Oldendorp was so profound that the language in his diary 'broke with traditional representations of the 'savagery' of the African, placing the root of evil as existing in *anyone* unconverted by the Gospel and given to barbaric, licentious, and inhuman behaviour, including the Plantocracy, the whites, and the ruling classes. Van Gent suggests that Oldendorp's

In the eighteenth century, 'savagery' was synonymous with excessive emotionality and a lack of emotional control, and linked with violent behaviour (Berry, Poortinga and Pandey, 1997). Restraint was a sign of civilisation, whereas a lack of restraint was associated with childishness, churlishness, or tyranny. In the eighteenth century, the term was mostly applied to African cultures and slaves. Yet Oldendorp often stingingly observed that the *Bläncken* plantocracy had lost their humanity by giving themselves over to 'savagery' in their brutality toward the slave class, in their lives of wanton dissipation, and their exploitative sexual abuse of African women. The plantocracy's violence, dissipation, and destructive nature has been detailed in previous chapters.

Van Gent points out that the boldness of Oldendorp's writing veered away from cultural convention and was the direct result of a radically different theological orientation. Combining two understandings of emotional practices familiar to the eighteenth-century Moravians, the religion of the heart and their philanthropic discourses of love and humanity, Oldendorp produced a document where his ethics (how he obeyed God) and his epistemology (what he believed about God and humanity) matched. According to Van Gent:

> Oldendorp's critique of the savage violence of slavery was put to work buttressing an emotional and spiritual affirmation of a common humanity shared by White and Black, slaves and slaveholders alike. (Van Gent 2019: 29).

Feest argues that Oldendorp presents a unique 'emphatic critique of the slaveholding societies in the Caribbean' with 'remarkable sympathy, pointing to the many positive traits of Africans' (Van Gent 2019: 32). As Oldendorp highlights the dehumanising and destructive forces of slavery on the West African nations, he gives an account of a people quite different from the common European conception of 'savage Africans' fit only for slavery, refuting contemporary arguments that dark skin is equated with evil (Van Gent 2019: 32- 33). These are revolutionary notions for Oldencorp's time and culture.

Oldendorp wasn't the only missionary biographer who was ethically affected by proximity to those suffering and enduring under the trade. The 'personal and emotional engagements of the Moravian missionaries with the people they sought to proselytise not only impacted their understanding of Christianity, but also caused them to rethink the nature of savagery, civilisation, and humanity.' Oldendorp resoundingly emphasises that sinfulness is a common feature of all of humanity (as descendants of Adam) and not a

specific characteristic of Africans. (Van Gent 2019: 29-31). Living out this awareness placed the St. Thomas Moravians under a different biblical anthropology.

Oldendorp departs from his own denomination's uneven pro-slavery position and concludes in his fourth volume:

> That they [Black Africans] are more sinful than whites and that one can generally claim this to be the case is a matter that is difficult to claim and not seldom I contrast to our experience …. Is it a wonder that Negroes, who have a soul *like any other human* …. Desire to free themselves from their slave conditions? (Oldendorp 2000-02: Vol 4, 560).

Drawing on the commonalities he witnessed throughout Europe among the oppressed classes, Oldendorp dismantles the classic Ham myth:

> Others regard slavery to be a consequence of Cain's curse. But there is no real basis on which to form this argument. …. Slavery also affects brown and white nations, which are very different from the blacks …. In Poland, Russia and Livland and the farmers are almost all slaves and even members of the most civilized European nations are annually sold into slavery …. Nobody suggests of these Europeans who have become slaves that their misfortune is derived from a curse and Gods threatened punishment (Oldendorp 2000-02: Vol 4, 529).

Thus, in Philadelphia Oldendorp was not merely radicalised into an anti-slavery position; he was radicalised into a closer understanding and application of biblical anthropology according to its alternative narrative. On St. Thomas Island, he met the Moravian missionaries and the African-led Church who also followed this narrative to varying degrees. By the time Oldendorp stepped ashore at St. Thomas, he was already radicalised into an of Christology and anthropology that was more in consonance with Genesis 1 and 2 and a people articulated and harmonised in Revelation 7:9 and 21:1-6, and therefore was already theologically and missiologically more closely aligned with the story.

5.6   Differing Editions and Competing Narratives

The printing of Oldendorp's manuscript itself revealed a historical conflict between conflicting theological narratives; a story within a story, bound up in the publishing of Oldendorp's work. The competing narratives, Oldendorp's manuscript and the denominational edition, were also driven by specific theological framings of Christ, his people, and his mission.

Oldendorp's original manuscript was edited and pared down for publication by Johann Jakob Bossard, a denominational superior who lived in the cultural confines of Moravian headquarters in Herrnhut, Germany. Bossard was far removed from the horrors, cultural complexities, and excesses of slavery and religious life on the island.

The Bossard edition was published in 1777,[3] and it only represented 1500 pages of Oldendorp's original 3000-page handwritten manuscript. The denomination's reasoning at the time was that it was necessary to edit for space and sense, however, Oldendorp himself viewed Bossard's edition as an abomination of his work. Upon seeing the final published edition, Oldendorp felt that qualitative differences in the two texts were so significant that he was scandalised upon seeing Bossard's edits: 'The History has been taken away from me and my name is included only to disgrace me' (Ahlbäck 2016: 191).[4]

Scholars have recently taken up the task of comparing two versions: the original manuscript, for which there is still no complete published translation into English from the original German, and the second version which was heavily redacted before publication by the Moravian denominational leadership, edited by Jakob Bossard in 1777 and translated into English. At the time of establishing the St Thomas mission, the false narrative of Cain the militant coloniser was in full sway across the Protestant world. Katherine Gerbner offers insight into the scope and persistence of Protestant Supremacy in the 'continued usage of the noun 'Christian' to indicate European … the persistent slippage between religion and race is indicative of how strongly Christianity was associated with mastery, knowledge, education, *and power'* (Gerbner 2018: 122) [italics mine]. Among evangelical missionaries like the Moravians and other Pietists, there was uneven application of a hard and fast doctrine of supremacy that kept Africans enslaved, and both slavery and spiritual equality were embraced in practice.

Bossard had no discernible first-hand knowledge of the actual St. Thomas population or the trade itself. Ahlbäck argues that Bossard's edition 'assumed a different ethical and emotional attitude to Oldendorp's African Caribbean informers to whom the editor had no personal relationship' (Ahlbäck 2016: 204). Bossard's proximity to denominational leadership was the bigger influence, considering the leadership attempts to align the Moravian mission with the institution of slavery. From the top of the movement, Zinzendorf preached Luther's teaching that earthly social stations were 'fixed and ordained by God,' which also affirmed Zurara's position that racial hierarchies were ontologically fixed and God-ordained. Although Zinzendorf equivocated at times on the

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[3] *Geschicte der Mission der evangelischen Brüder auf den Caraibischen Inseln* S. Thomas, S Croix und S Jan.

[4] C.G.A. Oldendorp to UAC, 2 June 1777, I Gudrun Meier, P. Stein, S. Palmié and H Ulbriht (eds), *Geschicte der Mission der Evangelischen Brüder auf den Caraibischen Inseln* S. Thomas, S Croix und S Jan., vol. IV: *Kommentarbrand Herrnhut: Herrnhuter Verlag*, 2010), pp 81-100, quote p. 100; Paul Peucker, Vorwort, in Ibid, p viii.

position, he sometimes asserted that the slave trade itself was ordained by God and must gladly be endured by those who were entrapped by it; such was the typical cultural Christian teaching of the Atlantic world (Gerbner 2018: 180).

Counter to his denomination's position, Oldendorp's original manuscript was descriptive and raw in its criticism of the barbarity of the slave trade, of slave life, and its indictment of the plantocracy. It was so blunt with his distaste for the trade that Ahlbäck dubbed him the 'overly candid missionary historian,' presenting him as complex and morally conflicted, in a complex, morally compromised situation.[3]

In sum, Bossard's edition served to legitimise the theological errors and the plantocracy's morality and ethics, while Oldendorp challenged them. When the scope of the redactions is considered, it seems Oldendorp was too candid for the sake of preserving comfortable relations with the ruling plantocracy, or to preserve the cultural narrative of the 'African savage' and 'White power and piety,' or to even cover the denomination's embarrassment and promote recovery from the excesses of the Sifting Time of the 1730s and 1740s, all issues that Bossard controlled to varying degrees in his editing.

Despite the controversy and the competing narratives, both editions still provide an extensive storehouse of first-person reflections on the lives and events of the St. Thomas community, the only known preservation of the lives and events of this community.

> This history now shows them as a people also blessed by the grace of God and elevated to great dignity in Christ. The true Christian character seen in the examples of believing Negroes who appear not infrequently in the history of the mission will not be doubted by those readers who are acquainted with the spirit of the gospel, both through the writings of the apostles of Jesus and through their own experiences (Oldendorp, 1987: xviii).

Historians still find both editions useful in telling the story of St. Thomas. In hindsight, and when considered in the larger scope of later history, even Bossard's edition 'did not downright beatify the slave trade in Africa,' rather it 'softened the critique of European participants in the industry' (Ahlbäck 2016: 211). In 1791, Bossard's edition still carried enough of Oldendorp's distaste for the trade and his humanization of its victims

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[3] Oldendorp's *Historie der Caribischen Inseln Sanct Thomas, Sanct Crux und Sanct Jan* spans a broader geographic area (all three Danish islands) and time frame than this project covers. The project's narrow purview is St. Thomas between 1732 and 1740, the period marked by anti-Christian hostility. Relevant sections to St. Thomas in that period were found on pages 84-85 as well as portions of *"The History of St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John, Book Four: Of the Blacks living on the islands, both the slave and the free"*, which constitutes about 13% of the unredacted text. Through translation services, I produced wooden translations covering key pages (467-563, 483, 506, 520, 542, and 563) to explore topics such as social hierarchy, Africans' entrapment, resistance, Moravian views on slavery, and Oldendorp's stance on Africans. Translations affirmed that Oldendorp rejected the racialised "mark of Cain" view prevalent among the *Bläncken* and some Arabs. He instead acknowledges the shared image of God in all: "One cannot say that a colour created by God…is vicious in itself…beauty consists mainly in education and not in colour" (Oldendorp, 2000: 619-622). Additionally, I translated testimonies (715-719) from enslaved and free Africans expressing deep desires for Christianity, baptism, and salvation.

that it was used by the Royal Danish Commission to recommend the abolition of the slave trade throughout the Danish empire. Enough integrity is maintained in the first-person accounts, even in the Bossard edition, that British abolitionists scoured his redacted edition for their own use against the trade. The two editions remain the only recorded accounts of the St. Thomas Moravians, and even with Bossard's hard edits, sparks of integrity still fly.

5.7   A 'Storied' Moravian Theology: The Philadelphian Ideals

Having navigated the ethnohistorical challenges that the Cainian dynamic brought to Oldendorp's documentation and having developed from it a theological approach to ethnohistory, the conversation turns to the theology of the community. Moravian historians call the theology of this period the Philadelphian Ideals. Chapter one introduced the Philadelphian Ideals, the Herrnhuters' call to return to a simpler, even more primitive expression of the church as it's found in the New Testament. It was also observed that the community's impulse was not, at its time, a new one for Christian communities who found themselves amid institutional corruption and scandal caused by the cult of Cain. Zinzendorf, in his historical research, had also observed that the communal impulse toward an original apostolic faith and its expressions, represent repeating, faithful voices of Abel. Abel's legacy spoke through the prophets of Israel in their age, and as this thesis argues, through history to today. Abel-like communities rise in response to Cain's hostility, and this project uncovered an important theological underpinning in the rise of such kingdom-oriented movements among the eighteenth-century religious institutions of Protestantism. To discuss these patterns, I first share the development and execution of the Philadelphian Ideals in further detail.

In chapter one, I outlined the core tenets of a return to New Testament priorities that formed two generations of theologians prior to Zinzendorf and the Herrnhuters. The idea of a 'return to communal simplicity' grew out of the discomfort of Protestant thinkers like Jane Lead, Johanna Eleanora Peterson, and later, the Moravian leader Count von Zinzendorf, and produced the Philadelphian Ideals that governed the life and ethics of the community. Recall from chapter one that the Ideals featured a distinctive and simplified worship style, a return to the sacrificial New Testament reality (In Spirit and in Truth), a return to a 'religion of the heart' that married ethics and epistemology, and a transformed life expressed as devotion to the life, suffering, and sacrificial death of Jesus. This inner life expressed itself outwardly with visible in-home worship characterised by lay leadership and a Spirit-directed and unified community shown by the two great pillars of *Catholick Love and Apostolick Faith*.

Those who followed these principles maintained a commitment to engage less in denominational factions, and more in the universality of their union with Christ in his function as the Head of the Church, ever-manifesting and directing the true Church

universal. Again, their Philadelphian Ideals would become the foundation for their *'other-cultural'* and *'other political'* counter-polis that sprang from Zinzendorf's own original research.

5.8   Zinzendorf's Search for the Kingdom Line

In 1735, Zinzendorf began his own research project to trace the lineage of the true people of God, or those he referred to as 'our first Brethren.' In his quest for establishing communities that would return to New Testament ideals, he affirmed several things that would identify the larger brotherhood of God's people for his day: first, he approved The Book of Concord as right thinking about God, man, and the Bible (Peucker 2021: 299).[5] Secondly, the Count affirmed that genuine Christians whose ethics and epistemology matched (orthodoxy and orthopraxy) could be found throughout other religious institutions of the day, representing the invisible church. This was affirmed previously by John Wycliffe, Phillip Melanchton, and other early Protestant reformers as they voiced opposition to Romanist ecclesiology and corruption; the same idea of the 'church invisible' is expounded on in the Westminster Confession of Faith.[6] Whereas Zinzendorf's contemporaries focused on the corruption that had spread throughout the major religious institutions of the Reformation (returning to the very corruption and division they had fought in 1517), Zinzendorf focused on the places where smaller ecclesial communities thrived and behaved with the character and context of the

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[5] Peucker notes that *The Book of Concord* was the doctrinal norm for each Lutheran pastor, who had to take an oath at his ordination to abide by this document. *The Book of Concord* includes the three ecumenical creeds (the Apostles,' Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds), the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, both the Small and Large Catechism of Martin Luther, and a few other texts. Zinzendorf saw the Augsburg Confession as a pure Philadelphian Creed, and the other books added by *The Book of Concord* unnecessary additions.

[6] WCF 25: Of the Church: 1. The catholic or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. 2. The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation, as before under the law), consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion; and of their children: and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. 3. Unto this catholic visible church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth, by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto. 4. This catholic church hath been sometimes more, sometimes less visible. And particular churches, which are members thereof, are more or less pure, according as the doctrine of the gospel is taught and embraced, ordinances administered, and public worship performed more or less purely in them. 5. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall always be a church on earth, to worship God according to his will. (Williamson, 2004)

New Testament church. In this way, the Count brought out a different understanding than his contemporaries; that 'such congregations, however small they are, visible or invisible, will exist for a while before others replace them.'[7] In other words, the People of God persist through redemptive history not by institutions remaining intact forever, but rather bypassing the Philadelphian ideals of the New Testament forward to the next historical generations through smaller communities who, once having outlived their usefulness, would die just as organically as they sprang up.

In an age that focused on larger, institutional-scale decline and recovery, this line of thinking was unique to Zinzendorf. Believing that the true church must have existed throughout all ages, the Count argued that decline was necessary for (1) the existing Philadelphian community's spiritual development, and (2) for future Philadelphian communities. Therefore, the natural turn away from institutional corruption and the impulse to return to the simplicity of New Testament worship and mission (the Sacrifice of Abel) was not only a predictable dynamic, but such communities could be anticipated as needed to pass the Philadelphian Ideals to the next kingdom generation:

> … each congregation of Christ had a beginning and an end with its necessary phase of decline. Where other historians saw a long process of continuous decline beginning with the early church, Zinzendorf saw cyclical developments of progress and decline where one Christian group passes the "light" to the next, carrying it through the ages. More important for Zinzendorf was his conviction that there had been a constant presence of a group of true believers from the days of Jesus up to his own time. The terms Zinzendorf uses for these development phases—growth, blossom, decrease, decline, and end—are similar to the concept of an organic development of history… (Peucker 2009: 14).

Zinzendorf's view captures the symbiotic nature of the Cain and Abel dynamic; that there is purpose in the decline of the church, in that it is necessary and useful in purifying, driving, and exposing the true kingdom line of obedience and sacrifice that will be revealed at the end of the Story.

Zinzendorf's specific version of Philadelphian communities was born into an atmosphere of suspicion of religious communities meeting outside of their established institutions. To meet outside of approved churches and denominations was frowned upon by both secular and religious authorities. This aversion came in part due to their history of canticles (illegal gatherings) that arose during the Protestant Reformation, but also due to a desire for doctrinal purity and ecclesial disciplinary oversight after the Reformation

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[7] Hans Schneider investigates Zinzendorf's Philadelphian Ideals in *'Philadelphische Brüder mit einem lutherischen Maul und mährischen Rock: Zu Zinzendorfs Kirchenverständnis,'* in Neue Aspekte der Zinzendorf-Forschung, 11-36.

– small communities forged outside of the denomination's local parishes/churches ran the risk of deviating from the doctrines of Catholic and Protestant establishments, and thus were closely monitored.

Zinzendorf makes a distinction between *ecclesial communities* which will see their own rise and fall, and *The Church* - the historical People of God - promised to extend into eternity among small groups of faithful individuals sometimes existing within larger institutions, and at other times existing apart from them altogether. Keeping in mind that secretive communities were forbidden in the shadow of the violence of the Reformation, Zinzendorf had no desire to leave the institutional systems. Rather, he aimed to establish such 'forbidden' communities inside the denominational church that took their ethics *and* epistemology seriously, in accordance with biblical doctrine; *ecclesiola en ecclesia,* or 'little churches within the church.'

On August 13th, 1722, when the Herrnhut community's significant prayer event occurred akin to revival, more Philadelphian communities were sparked and sent them spinning off from the original (44). Recall from the chapter one narrative that by the next decade, the movement of these small communities of character had fanned out in one of the most significant religious movements of the eighteenth century, including the African-led community on St. Thomas Island. The movement was so profound that the members began to regard themselves as a religious group apart from the three recognized religions, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Catholicism, even as it gathered up members from within all three (Peucker 2021: 2).

The question of the outworking of the Philadelphian ideals in practice evokes the character that drives the community. Their first approach turns the community inward to the individual believer and addresses the necessary heart-attitude of the converted that most closely resembles the posture of the saints of the early church. Drawing on *The Spiritual Battle of the Firstborn* by Johanna Eleanora Peterson, Count von Zinzendorf adopted many underlying ideas from Peterson's interpretation of personal spiritual development based on the seven churches in the book of Revelation:

> … it was a warrior's goal to become similar to Jesus, the firstborn, and thus also become a 'firstborn.' During the spiritual journey the Christian believer will be incited by love (Ephesus), suffer persecution (Smyrna), receive approval from the world (Pergamos), be tempted to abandon the true light (Thyatira), remain as the only righteous ones among those who are Christians in name only (Sardis), be set apart from the quarrelsome and corrupted 'old Jerusalem' to form a 'brother-loving, incorruptible, and indestructible new Jerusalem' (Philadelphia), and finally separate the 'false new' from the 'truly new' (Laodicea) (Peucker 2021: 149-150).

As Zinzendorf became more committed that the return to the primitive church was a repeated impulse throughout history, and that it acted as an antidote to and a shelter from institutional corruption, he looked at his own context and saw that what Peterson described as true for his generation:

> The present outward Christianity was corrupted. Roman Catholic and Protestant churches alike had abandoned the true light; they were characterized by "quarrelsomeness" and had become a "mere outward ritual affair." According to Petersen, the community of true Christians is characterized by brotherly love and fellowship with children of God "from all sects and religions" (Peucker 2021: 150).

However, the antidote to the corruption of religious institutions did not lie in separation and further division, a value that Zinzendorf struggled with, exploiting it at times, and at other times holding it dear:

> They should not … physically separate from their churches but rather separate in spirit. A physical separation would only lead to new 'sects,' something that according to Petersen should be avoided unless God calls one to do so. Petersen encouraged practicing brotherly love toward all Christians, whether one was in full agreement or not. That, according to her, was the 'spirit of the Philadelphian new Jerusalem: to love and embrace all children of truth from all outward religions' (Peucker 2021: 150).

Due to Zinzendorf's considerable theological and historiological influence on all global missional efforts that emanated through Germany's Herrnhuter movement, recent scholarship makes it safe to assume that the theological ideas launched between 1722 and 1732 had significant impact on the St. Thomas community when it was established and was its foundational and guiding principle.

Finding Zinzendorf's premise of a historical line of cross-shaped, often persecuted Christian communities, establishes a necessary line from the first breath of Adam in Genesis to the ingathering of God's people in Revelation. This line is essential to understanding the St. Thomas Moravians as a community that manifested the qualities of the New Testament church, thus earning Sensbach's moniker, 'a Black Book of Acts' (Sensbach 2005: 237). Further, locating Zinzendorf as the theological father of the St. Thomas Moravians affirms that the community lived with an understanding that they had received some sort of kingdom orientation from the generation before, to be handled with care and passed with divine responsibility to the following generation through discipleship.

Previous chapters have laid the foundation for the historical persistence of the Cain and Abel dynamic. Now, with a clearer understanding of the context of the testimonies and records of the St. Thomas Moravians, a deeper knowledge of Oldendorp's worldview as their designated records keeper, and a grasp on the theological and historical context out of which the community sprang, the next chapter delves into the St. Thomas Moravian community itself as a part of Abel's legacy of sacrifice and obedience under the hostility of various contextualised Cain cults. It's now possible to approach the St. Thomas Moravian congregation as a genuine reflection of the 'other- cultural' and 'other-political' communal nature into which the covenantal people of God are called in every era.

5.9   Summary

To regard the St. Thomas Moravians as a persecuted minority and alternative community through the Cain and Abel premise, and to compare their practices alongside those of the New Testament persecuted church, some level of acceptance of their own testimony of their conversions as authentic and genuine needs to be granted. Oldendorp's diligence, as well as his own internal and external struggle with the legacy of Cain make such acceptance possible. When considered alongside other primary source materials and supplemented by select pieces that were omitted by denominational leaders, both Oldendorp's meticulous recordings and Bossard's edited version still represent the two most comprehensive and detailed windows into understanding the St. Thomas Moravian population. His moral condemnation for the dehumanisation for the St. Thomas Moravians is strong, indicating a desire to dignify both the slave *and* the plantocracy and represent them accurately. Oldendorp writes of the power of a truthful narrative to transform the other dominant cultures on the island, showing confidence that such personal and cultural shifts in ethics can be accomplished through genuine conversion and transformation, and through a shift in epistemology:

> Slavery itself is undeniably the mother of many sins and gives cause for malice, stubbornness, disobedience, revenge, as well as to injustice and inhumanity   She [slavery] brings these fruits not only to the blacks but also to other slaves. And his is not only a curse to them, but also to their masters. Only true Christianity achieves change here and ensures that even slaves are treated in an easier and more humane manner – which reasonable masters can see very well …. (Oldendorp, 2000-02 Vol 3, 582-3).

The testimonies of the converted Africans who led the mission that are included in Oldendorp's manuscript and the Bossard version are key to unpacking the lives of the St. Thomas Moravians. Therefore, understanding Oldendorp's position on their dignity and their mission work is a valuable key to understanding the preservation of the community's habits and priorities. Some original translations from modern language scholars have been used in this research. Elsewhere, court records give snapshots into domestic life and public opinion on the Moravian Christians. Other diarised eyewitness testimonies from visitors to the Danish-Caribbean colony have also been considered. Church records, hymnodies and eighteenth-century doctrinal teachings were obtained from original documents through the Moravian Historical Society's digitised archive to further draw out the details of the lives of the St. Thomas Moravians.

I have previously discussed that Zinzendorf was among the first to identify the perpetual rise of faithful communities out of compromised ecclesial structures and institutions. The development of this historically resurgent community at Herrnhut marks the beginnings of such communities in Zinzendorf's era in general, particularly of the St. Thomas population. The development of New Testament principles and priorities marks their first attempt at defining the praxis that defined the community as an 'other cultural and other political' entity, one that bears both an indictment and an invitation to all cultures that surround her. This community was to be defined politically by the life, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, the hope of consummation of his set apart people, and the covenantal promise that throughout redemptive history he is keeping a people for himself. This alternate witness observed a political kingdom where the government will rest on the shoulders of their sovereign King.

Based on the information drawn from Oldendorp's recorded testimonies of the African leaders of St. Thomas, I have developed a theological approach to ethnohistory. It is a typological approach that is both descriptive and interpretive, analysing these themes through a premise of mapping and interpreting common patterns and associations relevant to the storied premise. This has uncovered six main priorities from the St. Thomas Moravians' recorded experiences: prayer, baptism, Lord's supper, Word, family, and Christian mission. From there, I explored the formation of their communal habits, priorities, and practices. The community's unique character meets at the nexus of several relevant historical factors mentioned in chapter one: colonisation, a more narrowly focused religious persecution within broad ethnic persecution, chattel slavery (man-

stealing), the roles of women, and the community's overall impact on their surrounding hostile cultures.

In the next chapter, I develop close readings of two short portions of Oldendorp: 'The Baptism of the First Negroes, and the Continuation of the Awakening Among Them' and 'The Suffering of the Negroes and their Teachers for the Sake of the Gospel' to explore the significance of the sacraments to the community.

Chapter 6: Cain, Abel, and False Sacraments

6.   CHAPTER 6: CAIN, ABEL, AND FALSE SACRAMENTS

In chapter one I argued that aberrant, man-centred Christologies, such as the one that brought the fifteenth-century narrative of the militant coloniser from Spain into the Americas through ecclesially-sanctioned, geo-political expeditions, are part of Cain's legacy. It was noted through the profligacy of Israel and Judah that the legacy of Cain produces worship, stories, sacraments, ethics, morals, and priorities of their own that are antithetical to the concepts of human flourishing and communal harmony found in Genesis 1-2. Chapter three discussed the symbiotic relationship between the two typological communities associated with the two brothers Cain and Abel. With Augustine's *City of God* premise in mind, communities oriented toward Abel's legacy arise from both non-religious and religious corruption, thus carrying on a line of faithful and doxological obedience. After the binary pattern of Augustine, I associated doxological obedience, human flourishing, new life, identity and belonging with Abel, observing that the biblical prophets, New Testament saints, and other faithful individuals raised the hostility and ire of the legacy of Cain.

Doxological faithfulness can be drawn from a storied, covenantal understanding of the people of God as an *other-cultural* and *other-political people* kept by God from Genesis to Revelation. I then outlined Nicholas von Zinzendorf's Philadelphian Ideals as the theology that defined the Moravians' eighteenth century return to New Testament simplicity and obedience amidst the corruption of their surrounding institutions and defined those ideals as the values and practices that defined the African Moravians of St. Thomas. The Philadelphian Ideals marked a departure from traditional early Anabaptist theology, and a return to apostolic communal priorities.

6.1   Juxtaposing False Narratives with the Covenantal Story

Augustine presents readers of *City of God* with two orientations from Cain and Abel that reflect two opposing loves: self-love versus God-worship. Using Rome as his example, he demonstrates that those two loves grow into two kingdom orientations dwelling and intermingling together in his own context. The Cainian orientation seeks its glory from men, whereas a community inclined toward Abel 'finds its highest glory in God, the

witness of our conscience' (Augustine 2012-2013: 136-137). Like Augustine's Rome, the culture on St. Thomas Island offers numerous snapshots of the Cain and Abel dynamic in practice. The significance of baptism in expressing the Abel-like orientation of obedience and sacrifice among the St. Thomas Moravian community came forward as testimonies in Oldendorp's records referenced the word 'baptism' more than 170 times.

The end of the previous chapter mentioned three Cainian groups who aggressed against the St. Thomas Moravians: the traditional Africans, the plantocracy and their overseers, and even the religious establishment. Just as the primal serpent in the garden misquoted Scripture to God's people to persuade them to false worship, Cainian communities develop religious practices around their idols that mimic a truthful narrative that defines Christ and his people. This results in a false or shadow sacrament that stands in opposition to sacraments that bear a truthful, covenantal narrative.

The juxtaposition of false and true sacraments will be employed as ethical extension of the application of the Cain and Abel orientations. False sacraments as a by-product of idolatry can be observed in tyrannical regimes throughout the twentieth century. When I lived off and on in the former Soviet Union for two years, I was introduced to the significance of false sacraments and their use in persecution through the writings of Richard Wurmbrand. Wurmbrand, a Romanian pastor, is remembered in church history for enduring 14 years in a Soviet work camp. Wurmbrand detailed the psychological and physical torture at the hands of his own atheistic government officials. He noted the weaponisation of 'sacramental perversion' by the Soviets with these words:

> I have testified before the Internal Security Subcommittee of the US Senate. There I described awful things, such as Christians tied to crosses for days and nights. The crosses were then placed on the floor and hundreds of prisoners had to fulfil their bodily necessities over the faces of the crucified ones. Then the crosses were erected again and the Communists jeered and mocked: 'Look at your Christ! How beautiful he is! What fragrance he brings from heaven!' Then I described how, after being driven nearly insane with tortures, a priest was forced to consecrate human excrement and urine and give the Holy Communion to Christians in this form. This happened in the Romanian prison of Pitesti. I asked the priest why he did not prefer to die rather than participate in this mockery. He answered, 'Don't judge me, please! I have suffered more than Christ!' All the biblical descriptions of hell and the pains of Dante's inferno are nothing in comparison with the tortures in Communist prisons. This is only a very small part of what happened one Sunday and on many other Sundays in the prison of Pitesti. Other things simply cannot be told. My heart would fail if I should tell them again. They are too terrible and obscene to put into writing. That is what your brothers and sisters in Christ went through and go through now! (Wurmbrand 1967: 57-58)

Just as God offered Cain the opportunity to bow the knee to him and lay down his self-worship for the worship of the One True and Living God, Wurmbrand wrote with compassion for the Soviet guards who tortured him and other believers with desecrations during his gulag incarceration. Two shadow sacraments, like those that Wurmbrand experienced under the Soviets, appeared in St. Thomas in the form of baptism narratives. Together with the truthful baptism narrative that the Moravian community practised, the three significantly defined personal and communal ethics. The two shadow sacraments played out as hostility toward the people of God, who invited spiritual transformation away from these communities and their destructive practices.

Following the religion of Cain, two of these baptism stories parrot covenantal Christian baptism: the blood baptisms of the Amina during the rebellion on neighbouring St. John's Island, and the baptisms of the Christian *Bläncken* into false narratives, which both ultimately led to dehumanisation, and destruction of spiritual and physical life. Further baptisms by the Moravian Africans follow the Abel narrative more closely to a truthful narrative according to the Story, directing the community into suffering for faithful worship. These begin with Christian baptisms on the shores of St. Thomas Island by the first wave of Moravian missionaries.

6.2   Idols, False Narratives, Perverted Sacraments

In the narrative approach, identity, epistemology, and ethics are intertwined. 'Who we are and *what we do* has everything to do with what story we are in. This is so because stories form worlds' (Hauerwas 1991: 125). In the covenantal view, one is either following a false narrative unto destruction, or a life-giving truthful narrative. In other words, identity, ethics, and epistemology are inseparable, and the god we serve will dictate our character and behaviour. Following the cult of Cain, both the *Bläncken* and the Amina were violent and destructive in their quests for domination because they were following stories that valued power and self-interest at the expense of others outside and within their respective tribes.

Hauerwas points out that not all social orders are created equal; some social orders take as their central problem 'how to secure cooperation between self-interested individuals who have nothing in common other than their desire to survive. Cooperation is secured by bargains being struck that will presumably secure the best outcomes possible for everyone (Hauerwas & Pinches 1997: 169). This shows itself as the *Bläncken* and the Amina served their own political interests.

The *Bläncken* were highly accommodating in their social ethic, allowing the plantation industry and Denmark's geopolitical expansion. This narrative caused them to develop into a culture of tyrannical, consumeristic adventurers destroying and exploiting the enslaved for their own fulfilment. The *Bläncken* who called themselves 'Christians,' blinded by Cain the militant coloniser (a tribal deity no different from that of the Amina Nation), were unable to make Christ visible or credible to their surrounding cultures with tragic consequences. Hauerwas and Pinches refer to this willingness to serve the world and self over Christ as a 'theological inability to see things clearly, and to call them by their proper name' (Hauerwas & Pinches 1997: 43-44), a distortion of individual and communal purpose, mission, and identity.

6.3   Christian Baptism as a Story-Bearing Sacrament

Concentrated attention will now be given to the sacrament of baptism, and its role in upholding, identifying, and emboldening this other-political and other-cultural expression that has been divinely reserved for God's people.

Crites and Hauerwas (narrative approach), and Vanhoozer, Hodge, and Belcher (covenantal approach) all affirm that the sacraments carry the story of the people of God in a particular way, have the power to remind the Christian Body of their identity, priorities, and values, and transcend time in a distinctive way. Baptism among the St. Thomas Moravians revealed a truth-bearing alternative witness among the St. Thomas Brethren.

As argued in the first chapter, ethics follows epistemology; what we believe and the story we follow inform not only who we are, but how we behave and what we value. Ethical pressure regarding the sacrament of baptism on the island continued. It was felt from the surrounding plantocracy, but also most notably from the Brethren religious establishment in Herrnhut. Battles raged at ecclesial conferences regarding how converted slaves should be handled; must baptism lead to manumission? What rights should be allowed in and outside of the church? What would Africans in ecclesial leadership positions mean in the larger social system of chattel slavery based on European dominance and superiority?

As bishop, Zinzendorf was the most influential person in the denominational hierarchy. Gerbner writes of Zinzendorf's ever-shifting views (which depended on whichever camp opposed his views at a given moment) on the ethics of slavery, race and theology. In a farewell address given to thousands of slaves in 1747,

> Zinzendorf reiterated that Christian baptism was in no way connected to manumission. 'A heathen must have no other reason for conversion than to believe in Jesus. The Lord has made everything for himself – kings, masters, servants, and slaves. And as long as we live in this world, everyone must gladly endure the state into which God has placed him and be content with God's wide counsel. God punished the first Negroes with slavery. The blessed state of your souls does not make your bodies accordingly free, but it does remove all evil thoughts, deceit, laziness, faithlessness, and everything that makes your condition of slavery burdensome (Gerbner 2018: 179-180).

Gerbner observes the significance to baptism and manumission in this view:

> As Moravian missionaries and their supporters in other regions sought to appease the fears of White planters, they turned increasingly to the language of race to demonstrate the stability of slavery and its compatibility with conversion' (Gerbner 2018: 180).

As mentioned previously, both Spangenberg and Martin both publicly denounced Zinzendorf's view (Spangenberg 1736). Yet there was constant pressure on the mission community from the religious establishment in Herrnhut, from the local plantocracy, from

established churches on the island and their African converts, from other non-Christian Africans, and from poor island Whites attempting to stake their own social claims. Eventually, this pressure contributed to violent religious persecution against them.

Gerbner notes that as the Moravian mission grew, 'apart from teaching literacy, the Moravians clashed with the plantocracy, the Reformed ministry, and their own Moravian leadership in Herrnhut about Black church leadership, baptism (should one manumit a baptised Christian slave?), and the meaning of marriage. It was rare for Blacks to become fully confirmed members of Christian churches in the new world, and the St. Thomas Moravians' decision to include Blacks in the most exclusive Protestant rite was radical. In February 1738, the missionaries appointed five 'Helpers' to take on leadership roles in the congregation. The chosen five were all baptised Africans: Andreas, Johannes, Petrus, Christoph, and Anna Maria (Gerbner 2018: 174-175).

Friedrich Martin described how a visit to the Company plantation led to 'the house that our Brother Clas built and dedicated to the Lord, and there we prayed together' and that 'several verses were sung to them and they were consecrated with the kiss of peace' (Martin 1736). On September 30, 1736, Bishop Spangenberg baptised three Afro-Caribbean men who were christened Petrus, Andreas, and Nathanael. 'Two brethren led the baptised home and celebrated a love feast with water and wine' (Spangenberg 1736). The three inductees became the first members of this new Black congregation, one of *the earliest Black churches in the Americas,* if not the earliest (Sensbach 1987: 3,7).

Sensbach cautiously interprets Martin and Spangenberg's early success in terms of spiritual hunger among the Afro-Caribbeans:

> Despite mixed motivations and reservations, the fact that supplicants sought [the mission outpost] out at all suggests that they were hunting for something, whether the spiritual appeal of Christianity, the material advantage of literacy, Martin's advocacy on their behalf, a sense of communal fellowship, or all of these. Some were finding answers (Sensbach 1987: 59).

Testimonies of unnamed enslaved people, particularly those given from the death bed, typically expressed baptism into a genuine desire for eternal life and the assurance of salvation that is divorced from any idea of earthly manumission, and an ability to discern between the two. Oldendorp identifies a genuine word-hunger among the newly converted:

> "The influence of the gospel then spread rapidly among the Negroes. There were already some two hundred of them who were eager for a closer understanding of God in Christ, providing an attentive audience for the brethren. The meetings were held daily … during the evening hours and were eagerly anticipated by many Negroes who made a long journey in the dark of night to attend, despite their full day's work. Before everyone assembled together, some time was usually devoted to instruction in reading and writing. The enthusiasm to learn such things was widespread among the Negroes. Everyone wanted to have a textbook. Whoever was lucky enough to obtain one carried it

with him everywhere and devoted every free moment to studying it. One young man found out his book had disappeared, and all his efforts to recover it turned out to be in vain. No scholar could have been more upset about the loss of his entire library than the young man was about the disappearance of his little book. All the more admirable, therefore, was his attitude that led him to wish its new possessor no ill but to desire that the new owner find in it the opportunity to know Christ and to experience salvation. Nor were the brethren in any way ever displeased by the efforts which they had expended to teach their Negro students how to read, for, in addition to the fact that their newly acquired reading skills enabled the Negroes to read the Bible, it also induced many of those who had come to the meetings with the sole purpose of learning to read to partake of the desire to get to know Christ and to share in his grace. (Oldendorp 1987: 317-318)

The Amina tribesmen's grisly baptism in blood during the St. John's rebellion can be interpreted as a false act representing a false narrative, one that anticipated the genuine Christian baptism for the island's Moravian community. Thus, a truthful baptism stands out as a distinguishing 'alternative mark' of the St. Thomas Moravian converts. Rather than a symbolic and violent act of retribution, rage, and revenge under the Amina, or as a sacrament denied to African Christians by the *Bläncken*, baptism becomes a transformative, identity-bearing rite among the St. Thomas community, returning dignity and conferring belonging to a marginalised and socially exiled people group. The sacraments are not merely for identity or to serve as an external witness; they also indict the 'Christian' *Bläncken* for their abandonment of the story and affirm the mission outpost's participation in its high-risk inclusivity.

The narrative approach has a strong emphasis on the story-bearing significance of the sacraments. Hauerwas captures their significance:

> … baptism and eucharist … are not just "religious things" that Christian people do. They are the essential rituals of our politics. Through them we learn who we are. Instead of being motives or causes for effective social work on the part of Christian people, these liturgies *are* our effective social work. For if the church *is* rather than has a social ethic, these actions are our most important social witness. It is in baptism and eucharist that we see most clearly the marks of God's kingdom in the world. They set out our standard, as we try to bring every aspect of our lives under their sway (Hauerwas 1983: 108).

In Crites' view, a religious symbol like the sacrament, or its elements, become fully alive to the community's consciousness when the sacred story (the covenant people kept by God) intersects dramatically with an explicit narrative (Christ's words in Scripture affirming that covenant), and a man's personal experience such as the tangibility of the elements, for example: 'the baptismal water is cold;' 'the communion wine is bitter or sweet;' 'the bread has texture and flavour.' (Hauerwas & Jones, 1989: 81-87). Past, present and future come together in the sacraments, creating a powerful intersection where the story is displayed on three planes. They affirm our identity whenever we participate and remind us that our politics and culture are based on a distinct 'otherness,' defined by the life, death, resurrection, and return of Jesus Christ. Our sacraments, whether their origins are from narratives false or true, tell the story of who we are, proclaim who we serve,

remind us where we will end, rehearse publicly what and who we value, and inform how we live and treat others.

If then, in the context of the story one is living the 'other-political and other- cultural' reality of the set-apart people of God, our shift in identity on conversion, our union with Christ includes an awareness of new primary allegiance that includes being defined by different citizenship, baptised into Christ and his kingdom, monarchy, political, and government system that is not of this world, where the government is on his shoulders.[1]

This 'other-cultural,' 'other-political reality' or kingdom framed in the Isaiah prophecy could be defined in several ways. Covenant theologians Belcher and Robertson agree that Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom that could be entered *immediately* by submitting to the rule of Jesus through faith in him. Belcher expounds on this with a valuable breakdown of the quality of this kingdom:

> The kingdom can refer to the authority of a king to exercise rule and all those who believe in Jesus submit their lives to his rule. The nature of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish is also a spiritual kingdom as he heals a paralytic to show his power to forgive sins (Mark 2:1-12). He overcomes Satan's temptations (Matt 4:1-11) and does battle with the demons (Matt 12:22-32). Jesus defines his kingdom as operating differently that the kingdoms of this world by bearing witness to the truth (John 18:36-37), giving his kingdom expressed through his believers on earth that other culture, other political essence that distinguishes it from every other culture on earth, and by which every other culture is simultaneously indicted for its incompleteness and encourage toward the one that is complete (Belcher 2020: 129-130).

Belcher continues that the present, spiritual reality of the kingdom means that the kingdom begins small, is hidden in the way it works, and can be rejected: a clear dynamic of the planting of the alternative witness of the St. Thomas Moravians. Yet Christ reigns now as King as he sits at the right hand of the Father after his resurrection and ascension, governing the world for the sake of his set-apart people[2] and 'there is so much here that is expressed (or is supposed to be expressed) through the scattered, exiled, fruitful figs of the Body of Christ, as they wait for the fullness of the King to come' (Belcher 2020: 129-130).

The manifestation of Christ as King to the world awaits his future coming when he will appear in glory at the end of the age, the enemies of God and all who persist in the way of Cain are defeated, and God's people will receive the fullness of their inheritance. Christ will reign not only in the hearts of his people, but also over the whole world.[3] This

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[1] Isaiah 9:6-7.
[2] Ephesians 1:22
[3] Revelation 11:15

kingdom comes by the power of God, not by wisdom or human effort (Belcher 2020: 131). Such an understanding shapes the way one moves among the culture in which one lives, shapes the mission, and re-prioritises the work to be done while there.

J. Deotis Roberts wrote that 'a people chosen of God are a people who have entered into a new understanding of their mission in the world.' (Roberts: 2003: 77). A significant identity shift resulting in different loyalties, priorities, values, and ways of being certainly occurred for the St. Thomas Moravians, with a line of demarcation clearly drawn from old life to new. On conversion, they became part of an established narrative by which the people of God may be identified and dignified, with allegiance and a telos that transcends race, ethnicity, or temporal nationalism, resulting in a new virtue of perseverance grown from the life of Christ. God's holiness traumatises the unholy, and therefore while the reaction of Cain and his cults to the obedient, Abel-like communities as they preconfigure Christ may be unjust and inhumane, it is understandable.

In Romans 6, the Apostle Paul exhorted his early Christian family as they faced growing persecution of their own to *remember the benefits and meaning of their baptism*, and perhaps even to remember how it seats them with Christ in his burial and resurrection and his defeat of sin and death and sets them apart from shadow stories and false sacraments. Christian baptism itself tells the story into which we are baptised, and simultaneously declares important and defining historical, temporal, and eternal truths. Protestant pastors have long exhorted believers to 'remember our baptisms.' With the Cain and Abel dynamic in view, this becomes not so much about calendar dates or even the circumstances of the sacrament, but the sacrament's larger meaning and place in the story; who baptism proclaims we are as God's other- cultural, other-political reality on earth, distinct from all other cultures and the primacy of their limited, temporal identities.

The way in which Christian baptism tells Christ's story is outlined by the two-Adam-Christology laid out by the Apostle Paul in Romans. Paul's discussion of the two Adams also carries strong echoes of the Cain and Abel premise. Paul outlines two fundamental conditions of the human experience: dead in Adam, made alive in Christ. Paul outlines these two positions as he writes to the church in Rome.[4] Baptism shows the binary story in real-time for both the believer and the watching community; the old

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[4] Romans 5:12-21.

identity and allegiances of Adam are submerged, dead and buried. The new allegiance emerges for the community to see and the believer to know as newly resurrected in Christ. The death of the old man and the resurrection of the new is also exchange of kingdoms. The binary implication is clear that there are only two positions; we are either one or the other, spiritually dead or alive. Paul leaves no room for a middle position.

In the garden, Adam was given authority over the garden by the One Who created him and his dwelling place; with this authority, Adam should have been the one to crush the serpent's head and stand in obedience. Since he did not, Yahweh promised that this One Who will come and fulfil righteousness and accomplish redemption will be the perfect One who will have his heel bruised (on the cross), but who will also be victorious in slaying that serpent and the destructive envy of Cain once and for all. This 'One' has come, defeated the deceit and destruction of the serpent, accomplished all righteousness, and through him the promise of righteousness has been fulfilled for Adam and his progeny.[6]

This promised one Who was to come, Christ himself, was not coming to achieve righteousness for himself. The glory of Christ bringing in an everlasting righteousness was foretold concerning him in Daniel 9:24, which tells us that Christ was already righteous perfect righteousness, truly human and truly divine, without the sin of Adam: 'He himself is our righteousness, and of his righteousness we have all received.' Already perfectly righteous himself, Christ accomplished the righteousness that Adam failed to acquire for himself when he was baptised by the prophet John:

> Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us *to fulfil all righteousness.*" Then he consented. And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17).

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[6] Genesis 3:15.

Righteousness and redemption are applied to men and women who are called to him, and they are only found in Christ. No one else satisfied the wrath of God. Even those who follow Cain realise God and his wrath exist, yet they suppress this truth in unrighteousness.[7] Christ's ability to satisfy the wrath of God incurred by Adam is what makes him unique and sets him apart from all other 'little-g' gods or tribal deities.

Paul writes to the Romans on a Christological issue of which he is the living embodiment. Hodge is helpful in his examination of Paul's exchanged life; the Damascus Road became symbolic of the journey from Adam to Christ, from the institutionalised establishment to the Christocentric movement, from a religion of works to doxological worship, and from the religion of Cain to the worship of Abel Charles Hodge speaks of Paul's conversion:

> Humility—what a difference in this regard between Saul the Pharisee and Paul the Christian! Before his conversion Saul seems to have had no doubt of what he should do. His fundamental characteristics seem to have been those of the type of character which we call masterful. He was a man of decision, of energy; somewhat self-sufficient, as indeed a Pharisaic training was apt to make one; little inclined, one would think, to defer to the guidance of others. We must guard against supposing him to have been a man of violent and wicked impulses, as we may be misled into fancying by his career as a persecutor and his own words of subsequent sharp self-rebuke—after his eyes were opened. A man of deep religious heart at all times, set on serving the Lord, his very vices were but the defects of his virtues. But somewhat headstrong, opinionated, undocile, perhaps; bent on serving God with a pure conscience, but constitutionally apt to go his own way in that service— for the God of Israel had never bidden him persecute the saints, and that was an outgrowth, we may be sure, of his habitual self-direction. (Hodge 1997:706-709).

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[7] Romans 1:18ff.

In Paul's exposition of the two Adams and their two natures, one finds the story-proclaiming quality of baptism and its movement from death to life. A person enslaved to Cain's legacy finds hope in the promise of a new life, a new affection, a new orientation, a new culture, and new *politick*, a new community, mission, purpose and end. Paul's two Adam Christology explains the destructive life of Adam exchanged for the transformed life of Christ. This framing helps the believer understand that to be baptised is to proclaim belief in the power of a truthful narrative, to publicly display one's faith in that story to transform us from Adam's failure to Christ's victory, and to trust that it will sustain us in the shift in our allegiance from the temporal to the eternal.

One of the primary gifts of baptism is the confidence that no matter the circumstances, whether personal suffering or persecution, one is assured that not only is God good, just, and loving in general, but that God is good to *his own*; that they are loved, secure, and kept. One has the same specific purpose in this life and a telos in the next; to bring glory and honour to Christ.

John Calvin said that as we remember our baptism, 'we must realise that at whatever time we are baptised, we are once and for all washed and purged for our whole life. Therefore, as often as we fall away, *we ought to recall the memory of our baptism and fortify our mind with it*, that we may always be sure and confident of the forgiveness of sins' (*Institutes*, IV.15.3). Martin Luther wrote similarly: 'For this reason we must hold boldly and fearlessly to our baptism, and hold it up against all sins and terrors of conscience, and humbly say: 'I know full well that I have not a single work which is pure, but I am baptised, and through my baptism, God, who cannot lie, *has bound himself in a covenant with me*, not to count my sin against me, but to slay it, and blot it out'' (Luther and Mayes, 2018). Therefore, to remember one's baptism is to remember that one is a different creature than before, washed clean of the nature and habits of Adam, free from the life of Cain, new and made whole in Christ, following a new story in him.

Vanhoozer expands on this binary understanding of baptism as two distinct orientations in relation to covenant, transformation, identity, and ethics:

> One of the names for the Christian community, used six times in the book of Acts, is "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). The background is probably the Old Testament contrast between two paths: the foolish "way of the wicked" and the wise "way of the righteous" (Ps 1:6). In the New Testament, Paul too depicts the Christian life in terms of contrasting ways: life versus death

(Rom 6:4), wise versus foolish (1 Cor 1:18-31), light versus darkness (Eph 5:8), faith versus sight (2 Cor 5:7), good works versus sins (Eph 2:1-2, 10). To follow Jesus Christ is to belong to the Way of the one who is the righteousness of God (Rom 3:21). Of course, one cannot belong to the Way without walking in it …. Walking is a transcultural human experience and is one of the Bible's key images for both personal lifestyle (think life trajectory) and interpersonal interaction (think companionship on a path or pilgrimage). One's "walk" refers to the way one lives … in accordance with the truth of the gospel, that is, the truth of the new reality that has come into being in and through Christ's person and work. This truth is that all church members are children of God who have been given the Spirit of adoption (Rom 8:15), the Spirit of Christ (Rom 8:9), so that there is no longer any ethnic or class divisions that separate members of the body of Christ (Gal 3:28). (Vanhoozer 2019: 58-60).

The traditional covenantal understanding of the sacraments draws distinct lines around the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper and defines them as 'ordinary means of grace.' These institutions are instituted by Christ and ordained by God to be the ordinary channels of grace to the souls of God's set-apart people. There is no power in the elements of the Lord's supper, nor is the act of baptism salvific. The ordinary means of grace are considered the ordinary channels God has ordained for strengthening and building up the body. These are distinct from the divine means of grace, such as the fulfilment of the Covenant itself. The means of grace are used by God to confirm or ratify a covenant between himself and Christians. Charles Hodge clarifies that the sacraments are 'a real means of grace, appointed and employed by Christ for conveying the benefits of his redemption to his people' (Hodge 1997:499-501). The sacraments are intended to provide benefits to each local body and its individual members: reflection on the unmerited gift of the remission of sins, an invitation to the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit, and a subjective influence of the Word on the soul in the opportunity to 'examine one's self *to see if one is in the faith (emphasis mine).*'[8] The standard Covenantal view denies that there are supernatural properties, or virtues, in the elements themselves or in the person administering them, but rather teaches that Christ is the Source of all benefits.

From a story-based, literary perspective, an argument could be made that the words of the gospel and the elements of the sacraments are not merely symbols referring to the gospel, but that they remind the community of the reality of the gospel – including identity, community belonging, and unique story. The idea of the sacraments as a story-bearing vehicle redefining identity and loyalties, and shaping mission is not in conflict with this idea of 'ordinary means,' and is appropriate for the Moravian Christian converts in pursuit of the Philadelphian Ideals.[9]

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[8] 2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10-11.
[9] Since the Philadelphian Ideals included a return to the priority of prayer, and in some cases even regarded it as a sacrament, future work should consider the role of prayer in this manifestation of the Moravian

Scripture attests that the strengthening principle and deep meaning of the Lord's supper for the believer are inviolable: 'You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's table and at the table of demons, too' (1 Cor 10:21). The Apostle Paul gives the warning in the context of Israel's idolatry as well as the idolatry of that surrounded the New Testament believers in the Christian community in Corinth. Given their power to proclaim the story for believer and unbeliever alike, as well as the power to strengthen and sustain the believer in the story to which they have committed their lives, it's of little wonder that baptism and the Lord's supper became significant points of attack against the St. Thomas Moravians and other African Christians scattered among eighteenth-century Cainian communities. Denial of baptism and the Lord's supper to the enslaved populations was tantamount to a denial of the historical global church practising her story. The denial was meant to spiritually weaken the believer to whom the sacrament was denied. To block any Christian from the table was to block their access to the reminder of their unique story, and to diminish any affirmation of their own unique identity and eschatological purpose in Christ. Thus, the withholding of the sacraments for reasons other than discipline could be seen as an act of hostility. There was, therefore in denominations that practised such restrictions, an egregious and violating nature to denying one's place at the table or with the common cup. Gerbner observes that among denominations in the eighteenth century's Atlantic world,

> Protestant slave owners fiercely guarded their Christian rituals from non-white outsiders and rebuffed the efforts of Quaker, Anglican, and Moravian missionaries to convert the enslaved population. For planters, Protestantism was a sign of mastery and freedom, and most believed that slaves should not be eligible for conversion. The planters' exclusive vision of Protestantism was challenged on two fronts: by missionaries, who articulated a new ideology of "Christian slavery," and by enslaved men and women who sought baptism for themselves and their children. In spite of planter intransigence, a small number of enslaved and free Africans advocated and won access to Protestant rites. As they did so, "whiteness" emerged as a new way to separate enslaved and free black converts from Christian masters. Enslaved and free blacks who joined Protestant churches also forced Europeans to reinterpret key points of Scripture and reconsider their ideas about "true" Christian practice. As missionaries and slaves came to new agreements and interpretations, they remade Protestantism as an Atlantic institution. (Gerbner 2013: iii).

movement to discover what they drew from New Testament communities in thought and practice. In addition to 'prayer as a means of grace' recognized by the Continental Reformed (Dutch, etc.), the English Reformed also included 'prayer as a means of grace' along with the Word and Sacraments (WLC 154; WSC 88). B.B. Warfield's treatment 'Prayer as a Means of Grace' in *Faith and Life* offers a traditional covenantal approach to this teaching (Warfield 1916:128-145) as does Charles Hodge in volume 3 of his *Systematic Theology* (Hodge 1997).

With the significance of the covenantal story to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper to Christian endurance under hostility in mind, the withholding of the sacraments for any unbiblical reason (that is, from apostasy or rebellion) is a form of cosmic and spiritual theft; robbing one of access to one of the most significant commands of the faith, given to shape and stimulate Christian endurance and continuance in the faith. All denials of non-essentials to the Christian faith: freedom of worship and assembly, freedom to convert, freedom to share the Gospel, and of essentials such as receiving the sacraments properly and unhindered, can be regarded as the same form of cosmic theft. Mercifully, it is God's covenantal nature, and his promise to keep his own, that prevents Satan's cosmic theft from having the final word; Christ has promised to keep his people through such anti-Christian hostility.

6.4   Summary

In previous chapters, I've built on an Augustinian premise of a Cain and Abel binary. Previous chapters have framed the eighteenth-century St. Thomas Moravian congregation's endurance under Cain's hostile legacy with a theologically driven approach to ethnohistory, using covenantal theology to highlight Scripture's metanarrative (epistemology), and narrative theology to highlight biblical praxis (ethics). If the post-liberal and covenantal narrative theological approaches are correct in asserting that sacraments communicate more than just performative rites, then assaults against the sacraments, perversions of them, and even their withholding from Christianized slaves by various denominations became a significant point of attack in the life of the persecuted and obedient Christian.

Scripture exhorts the Christian community to practise both sacraments. Baptism is commanded to be performed once in the life of the believer, and the command is given to practise the Lord's supper *as often as possible.* Both ordinances were instituted and done in sinless perfection by Christ himself.[10] As we do so, the Christian is not only walking the path Christ has set for his own in doxological obedience, but is also joining the historical line of saints who have been obedient to his command while simultaneously re-enacting the story of his life, death, and resurrection.

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[10] Matthew 3:13-17, John 1:19-24.

Baptism is also commanded as a part of the believer's discipleship of others into Christ's story, with participation and proclamation of a new reality, kingdom, allegiance, and identity entwined. Meredith Kline argued that 'one's theology of the sacramental signs of the covenant will have to be consistent with his theology of the covenant itself. (Kline 1975: 79). Kline addresses the role of sacraments as covenantal symbols that confirm God's promise of forensic justification, emphasizing that sacraments do not confer grace on participants, but serve as external signs of God's covenantal promises; they are judicial and declarative symbols that signify God's promises to His people rather than as works that contribute to salvation. He argues that baptism holds no salvific function, but rather affirms that baptism functions chiefly with an identity-shifting, proclamatory function, and points out that this quality is immediately evident in the Great Commission, in and through Christ alone (Kline 1968: 62-78). Though baptism holds no grace of its own, he still highlights baptism's witness and sign as a consecration, a 'consignment under the authority of Christ that is tied directly to the ancient covenant:'

> Now if the covenant is first and last a declaration of God's lordship, then the baptismal sign of entrance into it will before all other things be a sign of coming under the jurisdiction of the covenant and particularly under the covenantal dominion of the Lord, Christian baptism is thus the New Covenant sign of consecration or discipleship … The incorporation of disciples into the jurisdiction of the New Covenant by the baptismal confession of Christ as Lord is in clear continuity with the tradition of the initiatory oath of allegiance found in Old Testament covenantal engagements (and their extra-biblical counterparts). (Kline 1975:79-80)

Baptism is expected to be a singular, one-time event in the life of the believer. The Lord's Supper, however, is to be enjoyed often and can be seen as a part of ongoing sanctification and a consistent opportunity to reflect on which story one follows. It serves as both reminder and a corrective warning, that leads to a hopeful and joyful belonging. It's comparable to the mercy and grace extended to Cain before he murdered his brother, an opportunity to put away the idols of foolishness and destruction and return to the path of Christ, as sin is always crouching at the door waiting to master us; we are promised, as Cain was, that if we honour God as Ultimate over self, we will be accepted through no merit of our own, but through the grace of Christ (Genesis 4:7).

The Lord's Supper is likewise a proclamation of the covenantal story and begins in narrative fashion of the oral tradition that signals to each community, 'I am a part of this story, it belongs to me just as I belong to it.' Like baptism, it is one in which we participate, even as we proclaim. The words from Scripture open our minds and hearts to a scene that is unique in human history, but also present the confrontation once again of rebellious Cain meeting the Perfect Abel in the Person of Christ. The upper room scene opens on a crowded, yet still intimate moment:

Just as Satan intruded and shattered the peace of the first man and woman in the Garden, Satan also audaciously enters this scene. Reclining at the table, Satan has taken up residence in the heart of Judas Iscariot. There, reclining at the table, we see the two men dip their bread in the same bowl in the meeting of betrayer and betrayed. Death versus Life. Establishment versus Movement. Temporal politics versus eternal Kingdom. Deception versus Truth. Arrogance versus Humility. Violence versus Peace. Self-worship versus God-authority, Cain versus Abel … the Judas, and the Christ. Perhaps fingers even brush together in the bowl of betrayal, hand to hand, eye to eye, as Cain is exposed. 'That which you must do, do it quickly,' Jesus says. The pregnant, prophetic moment fades to black as Judas leaves the upper room, taking with him the spirit of Cain to finish that which began just outside of Eden (Ellis, 2023: 106-107).

I base this connection on Augustine. In *City of God*, Augustine links Judas and Cain as archetypes of betrayal and estrangement from God. Cain, the first fratricide, and Judas, the ultimate betrayer, represent the self-serving foundation of the *City of Man*, characterised by pride and rejection of divine order. In Book I, Chapter 3, Augustine presents both figures as symbolic of humanity's fall, contrasting them with the *City of God*, which is rooted in love and loyalty (Augustine 2012-2013: 19). Augustine observed that Judas echoed Cain's rejection of God's grace: 'For, even though he was repentant at the end, by despairing of God's mercy, he left himself no room for a saving repentance (Augustine 2012-2013: 19). Through this parallel, Augustine once again underscores the perpetual choice between self-interest and divine fidelity that defines the two cities. The definition is evident both in the life of Christ, and his followers. The weight of Christ's sacrifice is embedded in this table of remembrance – the Lord's Supper. While the table is weighty, it also carries the lightness of freedom in Christ; it involves looking back with gratitude, and forward with hope. The covenantal story's first table is set in Genesis 1 and 2, in the peaceful garden of *shalom* that has been stocked with everything the man and the woman needed to flourish. Their proto-table is the entire grove of fruit trees – for nourishment and enjoyment as the children of the Master Host. The true knowledge of good and evil was not on the menu, since rebellion, chaos, and disobedience are Yahweh's dietary restrictions, destructive to our being.

Later in Psalm 23, the table of comfort for suffering and obedience appears for those who preconfigure Christ, and for those who will come after and suffer in his name. Yahweh prepares a table of verdant pastureland for his own, laid out in the presence of all enemies; his children's cup overflows and they can eat and lie down in safety, where once Abel could not. At this table, we can remember the past faithfulness, honour the present, and anticipate the future of glory in Revelation 19, where the people of God are destined for his eternal table and eternal rest, and he is still the Host. But until all are gathered in glory, we are to 'do this in remembrance of me.'

After the events of the upper room, another table is recorded. It is a global and communal table, called the Church on earth, and it is laid out and set in Acts 2:42:

> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

The church's table secures all other tables; we have no other that does so, not tables of family, ethnicity, nationalism, or ideology. Christ is, as always, the Host of our table. We remind ourselves that because he is our ultimate deliverance, he is our ultimate allegiance. At this communal table, we rehearse, affirm, and yield to all elements of the ancient story authored by our master Host, our elder brother, Our Perfect Abel, our Final Adam, and our Saviour just as he lived it. This is where the St. Thomas Moravians gathered, where many stayed during their years of persecution to enact the sacraments and imbibe them as a means of remembrance, proclamation, grace, prayer, and endurance. Faithfulness to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's table was central to their endurance and can be interpreted as a sanctifying aid and comfort amid the false narratives around them. The sacraments, then, are a means of grace and power, yes, but they are also an invitation to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith in obedience and loyalty, or otherwise following a different story than the one that has been claimed and defined by Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5, 2 Peter 1:10-11). Not only is the opportunity for reflection and interrogation apparent in both sacraments, but also the opportunity to repent of Cainian impulses and return to the Way of Christ and his story, in obedience and doxological love.

Chapter 7: Conclusions: Abel Still Speaks

7. CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS: ABEL STILL SPEAKS

The writer of Hebrews reminds us that 'it was by faith that Abel brought a more acceptable offering to God than Cain did. Abel's offering gave evidence that he was a righteous man, and God showed his approval of his gifts. Although Abel is long dead … *he still speaks to us by his example of faith* (Hebrews 11:4). What might Abel's example be teaching us today from across the ages?

7.1   Modern Cains, Present Opportunities

Having traced the story of faithfulness and rebellion from Genesis through Israel, and then through the New Testament church to his Roman context, Augustine concludes that the binary relationship between the two brothers' orientations persists throughout history:

> And it is in this way that the Church runs its course on its pilgrimage in this world, in these evil days, amid the persecutions of the world and the consolations of God, not simply from the time of the bodily presence of Christ and his apostles but all the way from Abel himself, the first righteous man, who was killed by his ungodly brother, and ultimately on down to the end of this age (Augustine: 2012-2013: 338).

This contemporary age is in its own battles between Cain and Abel's legacies. Current approaches to understanding and solving our cultural and political situations commit similar cultural errors and seek corrections. Be they oriented toward Christian nationalism or modern Antiracism, these approaches will inevitably fall short if they (1) reframe the character, nature, and purpose of Christ in extra-biblical terms (Christology), (2) redefine the people of God according to sociological categories (anthropology), or (3) reduce the life of Christ to anything less than transformation towards life and away from folly, death, and destruction. This final and concluding chapter will explore how in focusing solely on the Eurocentric, Americentric, or Afrocentric narratives, we overlook Christian communities like the St. Thomas Moravians and the New Testament church as an alternative witness to a dominant triumphalist narrative that speaks with Abel's prophetic posture.

7.2 The Legacy of Cain in the Americas

While researching this project, I attended the Western Conservative Summit, a political action summit hosted by the Centennial Institute at Colorado Christian University. I attended this summit at the height of one the most contentious political seasons America. At the time, I frequented the gatherings of different political sides to observe trends, make friends, and locate common ground for discussion and problem-solving. At the time, I was just beginning to analyse the false religious forces that undergirded both the political left and the political right. It was informative to attend this politically conservative gathering and see how much Christianity was co-opted into its language, politics, and culture. I attended with ten friends from the covenantal tradition, including five theologically trained church elders.

Over that weekend, I observed six thousand participants, whom the organisers assumed to be Christians, as they participated in various nationalistic and religious activities. The speakers encompassed pastors, politicians, and high-level media personalities. The political summit culminated with a Sunday worship service, a pseudo-sermon that posited America as essential in God's plan to build his kingdom, and that was also devoid of any other political and other cultural Gospel of Christ.

Patriotic worship music was sung with gusto in a pseudo-political service, all working toward a climactic moment where communion was distributed to this gathering of six thousand attendees. The communion was offered by the conference hosts with the presumed authority of the Church; the table was not 'fenced,' and it was widely assumed that anyone at the political gathering was a professing Christian who was sanctioned to take communion. The citizenship confusion was strong and had even deceived my companions, who nodded, drank the cup and ate the bread, in agreement with the emphasis on America's covenant with God and the founding fathers' righteousness as a salvific focal point.

I could not join them. Reformed traditions observe the biblical injunctions to prepare congregants for the Lord's table as they are captured in the Heidelberg Catechism, defining the responsibility to 'fence' the Lord' table:

> 'Who are to come to the table of the Lord? Those who are displeased with themselves for their sins, yet trust that these are forgiven them, and that their remaining infirmity is covered by the passion and death of Christ; who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to amend their life. But the impenitent and hypocrites eat and drink judgment to themselves (Heidelberg Catechism, 81).

Since I belong to a theological tradition with a high view of the role of local church, that association places importance on all that the local church has been divinely entrusted to keep and guard as a unique and exclusive responsibility. I was unable to partake in a commercial and political misuse of the Lord's table. The story that began with the words, 'on the night he was betrayed,' did not fit into the jagged edges of temporal politics; that which was holy and set apart was being applied to the coming of an earthly kingdom, and exploited by a people to whom the responsibility for serving did not belong.

This is the sort of discernment that the Cain and Abel dynamic premise can provide, the ability to separate false narratives, and preserve and defend the unique character of Christ's story. In the habitual practice of the Lord's supper, which we are exhorted to do often, we inoculate ourselves against the idols of our own making that grow in their demands on our affections.

The left, right, and centre of American politics are not the only realms where distracting sirens are found; every secular culture produces its own religious narratives. Vanhoozer, in his emphasis on drama of doctrine, makes note of James K. A. Smith's use of the term, 'cultural liturgies,' particularly in how they involve the practices of body, mind, soul, and spirit:

> … everyday social practices that capture our imaginations and form habits by inserting us (bodily!) into stories that appear to make our lives meaningful. Smith is alert to the fact that we can learn things, even theology, by doing things with our bodies. What we do habitually begins to shape how we imagine ourselves in the world. It is the imagined story of which we are a part that makes sense of what we do on an everyday basis. For example, there is an academic liturgy—a course of preparation followed by exams—intended to form you into an academic. Everything in which we habitually participate leaves a little mark on our soul, forms our spirits, and trains our loves. What makes Christian discipleship so challenging is that churches are competing with a host of cultural liturgies, all of which are vying for the hearts of congregants. These rival liturgies want to capture people's attention, then their love, and ultimately their worship (Vanhoozer: 2019: 150-151).

My project concludes by further applying the Cain and Abel premise to two dominant Cainian ideologies in my own context that function similarly to those that surrounded the St. Thomas Moravians.

The fourth chapter of this thesis introduced Cain as a militant coloniser. My thesis now turns to the cultural and theological response to Europe's manifestation of the Cain community. I charted the church's involvement in the development of Eurocentric Christian dominance and framed it as a distinctive Cainian orientation that spread across the Atlantic. The grand scale of the resulting forced migration, headed by Cain the militant coloniser, changed the face of the world as well as the face of Christianity. Except for small cruciform communities like the St. Thomas Moravians, in many places it lost its bold, multi-ethnic, multi-class, New Testament shape and became a temporally and narrowly defined Christology, anthropology, and Christian community that was dominated by Eurocentric aesthetics and ideals. While there is a typical enculturation of

the Gospel that is to be expected from every generation penetrated by the Gospel, the extent to which its nature shifted into the exploitative and destructive marks several of its movements as more Cainian than Christlike.

In subsequent generations, a response rose to this reframing of Christianity as something particularly European. Theological developments highlighting liberation from colonising forces sprang up from Latin America through the South American Catholic theologian Gustavo Gutierrez and gave rise to the development of Black Liberation Theology. This subaltern theological expression aimed to provide a course correction to the theological and ethical abuses of aberrant Eurocentric theologies, and new voices from the margins emerged to highlight themes of resistance and liberation. Their new approaches attempted to provide a restorative premise for the African ethnic identity that had been damaged by the abuses of Eurocentric Christianity. What arose from this movement were various formulations of a counter-narrative to Eurocentric Christianity, birthed Cain the militant liberator, and vied with Cain the militant coloniser for dominance through the twentieth century, and into the twenty-first.

The benefits of the rise of this voice were significant. For the first time, the displaced African Christian diaspora was framed as a triumphal oppressed minority. By reconnecting faith with history and social realities, Black Liberation Theology reintroduced a needed understanding of ethics and praxis back into heavily epistemological and cognitive White European theology. Seeing themselves reflected in the Old Testament, the people of Israel, their Exodus, and the lamentations that enslavement produced, helped the Christians of African descent parse the complex social dynamics of oppression, and God's use of their unique history in the Americas. Among the benefits of liberation theology was teaching descendants of African slaves to rediscover the purpose of lamentation and dependence in suffering, a distinctive hallmark of the Black church in the Americas. The emphasis on liberation also decentralised Europeans as the central figures of the Bible. As liberation theologies refined under the first Black Consciousness Movement that began in 1967, they enabled the African Christian diaspora to see themselves as a people also loved by God, and as a people made glorious in his image.

In liberation scholarship, the African Christian experience is expressed primarily through a hermeneutical lens of deliverance from ethnic oppression focused on the biblical Exodus. There is a common experience of fighting very real national, ecclesial, cultural, and systemic forces. These Old Testament parallels have significantly

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helped African Christians locate themselves in the biblical narrative, which had previously been framed as a largely Euro-centric experience impacting ecclesiology, culture, and even civic legislation for Christians of non-European descent. And yet, despite its positive cultural contributions, Black liberation theology has limitations and deviations of its own. Like Eurocentric Christianity, it redefines Christ and the people of God apart from the covenantal story. In this section I will argue that by beginning with Israel in Egypt, or in the Exodus, or in the story of Christ's incarnation, liberation theologies have not gone back far enough in the story to create a picture that makes the end, the ingathering of the nations in Revelation 7:9-10, possible.

The impulse to search for Christ in the Exodus story was sound; Meredith Kline observes that 'the gospel, like all dramas, involves both entrances and exits. There is an 'exodus' in the Gospel, and a 'gospel' in the book of Exodus. In each case, the mighty salvific act of God takes the form of an 'exit.' Exodus and the Gospels have the same thematic focus' (Kline 1989: 181). Francesca Murphy reminds us 'the Exodus, God's deliverance of Israel from their oppression in Egypt, is the great saving event of the Old Testament. It is an event of high drama, the long-awaited fulfilment of God's earlier promise to Abraham. Yahweh promises deliverance and delivers on his promise. The exodus thus becomes the one act, more than any other, that serves to identify the God of the Covenant: 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt' (Exodus 20:2).

The exodus is a key theo-dramatic development: 'The historical imagination of the author of Exodus transforms the 'common-place' history into what Calvin called a *theatreum gloriae Dei,* a theatre of the glory of God' (Murphy 2000: 79). In other words, the Exodus is so intertwined with Yahweh's covenant that the primary characters of the Exodus simply cannot be replaced with other figures.

Based on an identificational interpretation of Israel's Exodus, the African Christian experience is often parsed through a lens that presents Christ as an earthly liberator bringing Africans through a temporal exodus, out of the grip of an oppressive Eurocentric society. Beginning in the slave quarters with a generalised oral tradition of Christ as the liberator of the oppressed, further theologies developed among African American Christians that presented a Christ *only* in solidarity with the historically oppressed and downtrodden; a God of the poor and meek who empowers the downtrodden to fight for their own liberation through Jesus. Christ's full nature is overshadowed by his

role as the 'Great Liberator' (Pinn, Cannon and Hayes, 2014: 111). Albert Cleage offered the most radical Christology by asserting that Jesus is not simply ontologically Black, but that he was physically a Black Jew who lived in a Black nation (Israel), who came to free a people from White (Gentile) oppression (Cleage 1968: 111).

Cone's presentation of Black Liberation Theology likewise introduced the benefit of a new perspective on Scripture and ethnic representation to the African American Christian community. He shed light on previously unexplored aspects of the African American Christian community's place in the biblical narrative, declaring that the Bible was not limited only to the culture that cultivated the Western mind but had also justified and allowed great evils against humanity. This new understanding had a liberating effect on African Christians who had experienced the moral inconsistencies of Eurocentric Christianity.

Cone argued directly against the way of Abel, the prophets, Christ, and the New Testament values of Christ-centred suffering when he stated that Blacks should have killed their oppressors instead of trying to 'love' them. (Cone, 2010: 54). Cone limits natural and special revelation to a transformative, salvific experience exclusive to the Black racial experience (Cone, 2010: 56-64), suggesting that non-Blacks may be saved by sharing the experience of suffering under racism. This opens the door to a possible outcome of Black liberationism, the creation of an alternate orthodoxy and the dehumanising oppression of a new, oppressed 'other' by its own design; in alleviating oppression it risks causing oppression of its own. By limiting the Person of Christ to the single dimension of Liberator and a singular mission of justice, liberation theologians have cast many persevering Christians of African descent as passive recipients of their oppression. The St. Thomas Moravians, having taken the New Testament stance that valued their own sufferings as obligatory to a life obedient to Christ as redemptive, and with their focus on a kingdom mission where racial justice was seen as a by-product of Christian life rather than a goal, would have perhaps fallen into this category.

Theologian J. Deotis Roberts argued against Cone's framing of Black Liberation theology for precisely these deviations. Roberts does affirm the damage that White supremacy has caused to displaced Africans:

> A religion that is closely allied with the ruling class in a given society is most likely to be priestly only. It sanctions the status quo. Priestcraft and statecraft are one. Whatever is approved by politicians is sanctioned by the priests. The church becomes as department of the state, and priests become wealthy and privileged. "God and country" becomes a favorite slogan. The kingdom of God and the American dream are seen as the same. Very devout Christians sincerely believe that if the kingdom of God comes, it will be in America. Black religion will have none of this. As oppressed people, blacks have developed a sensitivity to injustice and inhumanity that has become a part of

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their religious and moral perception. Their experience of racism has made them keenly aware that something is radically wrong with America (Roberts 2003: 68).

Roberts quotes Charles Long, who notes that many European theologians' writings:

> … tend to be provincial and assume Western culture to be the standard of civilized life. According to Long, they are 'carrying on the hermeneutics of conquest.' and their understanding of man is based on the "pre-eminence of *their* historical period and culture as the absolute arbiter of all human values." What we need, according to Long, is a "reflection upon the real meaning of death and the real meaning of life in the light of an inclusive understanding of mankind. (Roberts 2003: 40-41)

Roberts notes that he explicitly quotes Long because of his interest in a universal theological expression *that reaches all men*. While neither Long nor Roberts is distinctly focused primarily on an '*elect*' people of God in the Reformed or covenantal sense, his impulse is still closer to the biblical narrative that ends with an ingathering of the nations, and an ending that is not ethnically or nationally exclusive, or that is not based on power, social dominance, or economic class. Roberts argues against Cone that bitterness and hate, when allowed to control one's total outlook, blunt communication (witness) between oppressors and the Christian oppressed. Roberts intentionally modifies Cone's prevailing thought on Black Liberation theology:

> It would be impossible for another theologian to articulate the anger and frustration of Black people better than James Cone. But in a real sense, his role is demolition. Someone has to build a viable statement of the Christian faith. It remains to be seen whether [Cone] can overcome the self-imposed restrictions that limit his program. The exposure to perspectives and resources needed for theological construction and maturation will be found in the broad field of theology and not merely in reflection on the Black religious experience… (Roberts, 2003: 42)

Roberts similarly tackles Cleage's vision of a Black Messiah:

> I do not espouse a literal Black Messiah, I do not need to find Black Jews. Albert Cleage, who holds such a view, has done violence to biblical history without scholarly justification. Cone employs existentialism as a method but selects Camus, who considered theology as intellectual suicide, as his model. Also, Cone and Cleage appear to require that whites accept the Christ of the oppressed. This could very well create an identity crisis for Whites. I would like to hold on to a universal Christ who reveals himself existentially as I have explained. The symbolism of the Black Messiah is especially helpful for Black Christians, but it does not deny the possibility that others may confront him in a different cultural and ethnic dress that is more significant for them (Roberts, 2003: 45).

Roberts refers to an ethnically relevant messiah as 'religious existentialism;' and proposes a new take on the Black church, which he calls a Black Ecclesiology of Involvement. This approach does not merely centre itself in the Old Testament narrative but finds its locus in both the Old and New Testaments. He begins with a Christocentric orientation, rather than an anthropocentric one:

> *Ecclesia* was first used of the Christian community that was gathered at Jerusalem by the preaching of the apostles (Acts 5:11, 8:1, 3). This community was made up of those who had been baptized and received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:37-41). This redeemed community had already received the Spirit of Messiah. These are the people of God who are heirs of the promise - continuous with the people of the Old Testament (Acts 7:38). (Roberts, 2003: 75)

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Roberts further argued that a people chosen of God are a people who have entered a new understanding of their mission in the world. Instead of being victims of suffering, they transmute suffering into a victory. If the people of God correctly understand the role of a 'suffering servant', they are not led to consider themselves superior or favoured before God. Upon entering a deeper understanding of how their lives have been purged and purified by unmerited suffering, they may then become a 'saving minority,' instruments of God's salvific purpose for all men (Roberts, 2003: 77).

Roberts' ecclesiology opens the door to frame the African Christian diaspora in the Americas as part of a larger persecuted religious minority. Using Roberts' Black Ecclesiology of Involvement as a basis for oppressed minorities as a *type* of the people of God, rather than the absolute embodiment of the people of God, places Christian communities back in the covenantal story and makes Revelation 21 the fulfilment of their divine identity and story: 'I will be their God, and they will be my people.' Exploring Christian communities with a lens that is faithful to the covenantal story produces a truly diverse community and ends the story where it began, with a set apart people bound up in Adam and Woman, harmonised and set free by Christ.

Black Liberation and Eurocentric theologies, then, reveal themselves to be formulations of Christianity that focus on political power and cultural dominance (Yoder, 1984: 110). Both are inherently Americentric based on the success or failure of the American religious and political experiment, and both present alternate Christologies, anthropologies, telos, and paths to salvation. By focusing on the Eurocentric or Afrocentric narratives only, we overlook Christian communities like the St. Thomas Moravians who functioned like the New Testament church as a viable, 'other-cultural' alternative to a dominant triumphalist narrative, and who speak with the prophetic life of the obedience and sacrificial worship of Abel.

A question remains regarding how the Cain and Abel dynamic would speak to ethnic minorities who suffer discrimination or persecution for more than one identity, or in Antiracist parlance those who have several intersections of marginalisation, discrimination, and persecution; such was the case of the St. Thomas Moravians. How should they regard the idea that one should simply 'suffer indignities well rather than seeking justice and liberation? Is this merely a function of the privilege that allows the dominant class to maintain its position? The Cain and Abel paradigm provides an answer that is founded on the centre of the ancient story, Christ himself. Both false narratives under

consideration in this section eschew suffering as an unjust force wielded by human hands that must be relieved. Scripture reckons suffering for Christ differently and enumerates throughout the New Testament that suffering *for his name's sake* is unique compared to all other sufferings. Suffering for the name and cause of Christ accomplishes ends that other sufferings cannot. It is considered a privilege, a mark of belonging, is under the authority of the Author of the ancient story, accomplishes comfort for other sufferers in the temporal realm, and provides an alternative witness to all other forms of suffering for the sake of calling Cains to answer the call to repentance:

> But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Corinthians 4:7-11).

It is helpful to read all of Paul's letters through a contextual understanding of persecution:

> Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (Philippians 3:8-11).

And finally, 1 Peter of the New Testament speaks of the church in the context of persecution, with a specific warning against the idols of Cain:

> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 5:6-11).[3]

The two Cainian impulses, Cain the coloniser (or nationalist) and the liberator, remain at odds in the American context. Each has various communities that have splintered off into subgroups that still hold influence over the American evangelical church at large. Both impulses hang excessive salvific weight of the true marks of Christianity on dominance over control of the American political and cultural experiment,

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[3] *'For my name's sake.'* See also John 17, Matthew 10:22 and 19:29, Acts 5:41, Acts 9:16, Romans 8:17 and 8:36, 2 Corinthians 1:7, 11:23, and 12:10, 2 Timothy 2:12, James 5:10, 1 Peter 4:16, Philippians 1:29.

building Cainian communities. These still produce prophetic communities of Abel in response, in the cycle that Augustine and Zinzendorf predicted.

Several American scholars expand our understanding of Cain's legacies that have deeply impacted the American landscape. At times the cults are driven by a Christian narrative of divine rights, as explored by Steven Keillor, Mark Noll, Charles Wilson, and Frances Fitzgerald. This project has already discussed Keillor's views at length in chapter three of this project Mark Noll further covers the Americanization of Calvinism and Methodism into a distinctive politically and culturally motivated hybrid. Noll argues that once on the shores of the 'New World,' what began as a direct line of European traditions of the Protestant Reformation quickly evolved into a distinctly American set of beliefs that conflated Christianity with temporal government, economy, and republic, bringing results both good and ill.

Noll supplies the timeline from Puritanism through the Civil War, where opposing North and South forces were finally driven to war believing that their preferred styles of government were each part of God's will as God's elect, fighting for the future of America. Charles Wilson's *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920* articulates how the Confederate South's defeat fostered an ethno-nationalistic religion with a distinct theology, iconography, and hymnody glorifying Southern culture as the kingdom of God. This produced communities who venerated blood-stained and battle-torn relics, with stained glass church windows that reimagined biblical figures as Southern war heroes (Charles Wilson, 2009: 18-36). The South's theology of the Lost Cause gave birth to the Ku Klux Klan, Black codes, unprecedented public lynching of African Americans at family and church events, and many saved body parts of the lynched as gruesome souvenirs (or 'relics'). In the twentieth century, this ideology gave rise to America's unprecedented Jim Crow era of segregation, terrorism, and violence (Wilson, 2009: 100-118).

Frances Fitzgerald's opus on American Evangelicalism *The Evangelicals, the Struggle to Shape America* begins with Jonathan Edwards' role in American Christianity and charts a timeline to today's modern American Evangelicals. Fitzgerald notes that individual communities of life in the kingdom line who made positive contributions existed throughout history; the faithful. Various strains affirmed Christ's house of life, birthed abolitionist and anti-slavery movements, emphasised adoption care and care for the indigent, established public school systems to abolish illiteracy, and established hospitals. According to Fitzgerald however, 'true Americans,' were conflated with

churchgoers by the time of the Eisenhower administration, with national leaders conflating American ambition and national identity with the kingdom of God. Fitzgerald observes the Christian Right was born in the post-Nixon era through a combination of political action through Southern fundamentalism, evangelicalism, and Republicanism, giving birth to a modern and distinctive religio-tribal ideology such as described previously. The response has been the rise of destructive deconstructionism, allegiance to West African ancestor worship and other ethnic cults, and the proliferation of ideologically Marxist organisations that are similarly hostile toward traditionally orthodox and transformative Christianity.

Among these counter-ideologies, Ibram X. Kendi's Anti-racism social movement has become predominant. To return to the teaching of Ibram X. Kendi and his position as what McWhorter has defined as 'Antiracist clerics' of our current cultural moment, Kendi makes clear his misunderstanding of Christology, anthropology, missiology, and the Gospel according to the ancient story, reducing Christ to an earthly liberator:

> So, yeah, I'm a preacher's kid. And my parents pretty much met in what was known as the Black Power movement. But more specifically for them, the movement for black theology. And so they were both Christians who imagined that the church was supposed to be an engine of liberation, that Christianity was supposed to be a source of liberation for black people and humanity. They looked at Jesus as black, who had a 'fro like they had their 'fros. And what I sort of ultimately realized in analyzing the form of Christianity that they were raised in, particularly during the black theology movement and, I should say, contrasting that with the form of Christianity that 80% of white evangelicals had when they voted for Donald Trump. I think one of the ways we can distinguish it is one being liberation theology. *In other words, Jesus was a revolutionary and the job of the Christian is to revolutionize society. That the job of the Christian is to liberate society from the powers on earth that are oppressing humanity.* Everybody understand that? So that's liberation theology in a nutshell. Savior theology is a different type of theology. The job of the Christian is to go out and save these individuals who are behaviorally deficient. In other words, we're to bring them into the church, these individuals who are doing all of these evil, sinful things and heal them and save them. And then once we've saved them, we've done our jobs. And to me, Antiracists fundamentally reject savior theology. That goes right in line with racist ideas and racist theology, in which they say, "You know what, black people, other racial groups, the reason why they're struggling on earth is because of what they're behaviorally doing wrong, and it is my job as the pastor to sort of say these wayward black people or wayward poor people or wayward queer people." That type of theology breeds bigotry. And so to me, the type of theology of liberation theology breeds a common humanity, a common humanity against the structures of power that oppress us all.[4]

Kendi's reframing is significant, considering his influential position as a cultural cleric (to use McWhorter's term) for one of America's most rapidly growing ideologies. Through the appropriation of the language of Christianity, Kendi has been able to, as McWhorter details in chapter four of this thesis, achieve a complete and thorough

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[4] *How To Be Anti-Racist: Ibram X. Kendi in Conversation with Molly Crabapple*, 2019.

transformation of the Antiracist social movement into a religion - a Cainian community of its own, striving for a utopian ideal and a social and political dominance in the public square.

The dominant ethnically-centred American adaptations of Christ's story, whether they frame Christ as a coloniser, a liberator, a social revolutionary, a patriotic nationalist, or a profiteering adventurer, may all be interpreted as similar expressions of the legacy of Cain. Each has in view its own temporal version of the kingdom of God, achieved through human means. Each ideology comes with its own radically different story-ending from the one pictured in Revelation 7:9-10 and Revelation 21, with the ingathering of all nations. They do not differ so much in their goal of seeing a particular order established in the temporal realm, but more in which inhabitants have cultural and political power at any given time, and whether each community is treated justly. Both theologies frame their 'outsider/other' as an existential threat, to be either contained or marginalised. In his theo-dramatic approach to honouring the grand story, the Catholic theologian Von Balthasar considers the ramifications of misconceiving the fundamentals of the God/World relationship story, and warns of the 'twin abysses of a systematic world in which God, the absolute Being, is only the Unmoved before whom the moving world plays out its drama [Cain the militant coloniser, apathetic to oppression and suffering of God's true people, found in the invisible church but outside of their constrained definition of community], and a mythology which absorbs God into the world and makes him be one of the warring parties of world processes' (Von Balthasar 1988: 1:131).

Dr Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer's recent work *Critical Dilemma* tackles the Conian roots of Kendi's Antiracist approach to Scripture. They analyse Antiracism's approach to identity, justice, and the character and nature of God, by questioning the now-popular notion that Christianity's central idea is 'liberation from oppression.' They observe that as Dr Willie Jennings works out his own corrective to the history of racism in the Americas, he makes similar mistakes as Kendi and as Cone by making monoliths out of large categories of people groups (a too broad a view), while simultaneously truncating the Gospel (too narrow a view) that is found in the ancient story and reducing it to liberation from oppression. A misunderstood anthropology, a poor Christology and a misdirected mission seem to be hallmarks of the Cainian impulse. Shenvi and Sawyer agree that the corrective for society's ills and man's inhumanity to man, including

opposition to biblically faithful worshipping communities, must strike squarely at the idolatrous root that took hold in Genesis 1-3; not at any other stopping pointing history, since it is in the sin nature of the ancient story where the problem lies. Back history up to the earliest days of the ancient story in Genesis 1-3, and we encounter the first commandment that 'God's people should place no other gods before him;' it is there we find Cain's murderous aggression against Abel. To recapture the ethical theme of chapter one, the Church must always, and in every age, answer to the question posed to Adam and Woman: 'Who will be the arbiter of good and evil, of right and wrong? Will God be the Ultimate Arbiter based on his character, or will man attempt to judge based on himself as the standard of perfection?'

Shenvi and Sawyer affirm that framing Jesus solely as a political liberator is to build on sand that shifts with the winds of culture and popular opinion: 'Without question, political conservatives can succumb to the same temptation. But bending Jesus' teaching to your political goals is far easier when you already view Jesus' mission as primarily material and political.' This truncated and solely temporal Jesus, shed of the significance of the cross and its sacraments, is not the Jesus who can save, nor is he the Jesus who can gather and harmonise his own at the beginning of the new heavens and earth. They will cause nothing less than the shattered shalom of Genesis three ending in an eroded orthodoxy, eroded relationships with others, and the erosion of the health of the local church having divided the body of Christ into 'warring camps based on gender, race, and ethnicity, into Allies and Bigots, the Woke and the Anti-Woke' (Shenvi and Sawyer 2023: 428-429).

Meanwhile, Jennings' changes to the ancient story are more subtle. Just as Dr Jennings brings primary sources that help us understand the world of the Atlantic and how temporal issues like race and ethnicity shaped the context of the New World, his commentary specifically on Acts is poetic with many of his observations profound and relevant to the people of God. However, in some instances he is unclear as to who is the object and aim of the Gospel mission; is it the set apart elect, or is it all of humanity in a view of universal salvation that denies the elect? Or rather, are societies generally oppressed throughout the world to be the focus, those who suffer under oppressive material systems? Is general suffering to be regarded as on par with the persecution of the people of God? Jennings' lack of clarity on the covenantal promise inherent in the mission 'I will be your God, and you will be my people,' leaves his view vulnerable to deviation from Christ's coherent story. In his commentary of Acts chapter 1, Jennings applies

a modern understanding of revolution and casts the Incarnation as the inauguration of an ultimate and embodied revolution, upsetting the systems of the temporal and the eternal. Jennings says this about the nationalistic impulses of those who waited for Messiah:

> Jesus does have power and the reign of Israel will be restored, but not as the disciples anticipated it …. Biblical Israel's hopes and dreams for self-determination and freedom from Roman oppression as witnessed in the desires of the disciples of Jesus prior to Pentecost were understandable, but Jesus collapses all such hopes and dreams into his own life and turns us toward the coming of the Spirit and a new cultural politic of joining. Nationalism remains a powerful way of imagining life together because it is a theological vision that mimics the desire of God for our full communion with each other. It is communion without God or God simply used as a slogan. This is why nationalism for us moderns is the first idolatry, because it places another god before God. It places a god-bound-to-our-nation over the God of all nations (Jennings 2017: 22).

On nationalism, Jennings' interpretation and application comport with the ancient story. He paints an accurate picture of what Scripture says has always worked against the covenantally-based, other-cultural and other-political kingdom that Christ is now commissioning his elect to spread. However, like the writings of Kendi, the Antiracist approach leaves the interpretation vulnerable to reidentifying the people of God according to temporal terms, and not terms based on the covenantal story.

In chapter six, I discussed the relationship of the sacraments to the covenantal story, and in chapter one, I analysed the views of the early narrative theologians, that the veracity of a narrative is proven by how well its beginning, middle and end comport. To miss any essential component of the story is also to miss the unique identity of the set-apart people of God. Any change to the narrative makes it a false narrative; we can no more change the story's characters, nature, and the story's constituent parts than we can change the sacraments to Skittles and Arizona Iced Tea in honour of justice for the slain American teenager Trayvon Martin,[5] or distribute the elements at a political action committee (PAC) as if we are a new and politicised expression of the local church. Once a covenantal understanding of Christ's metanarrative has been violated so that it no longer comports with itself, or when we redefine what the Bible says to be morally, relationally, and spiritually destructive, the 'Christ-delivered' person becomes their cultural outsider. The new in-group must empty the testimony of the faithful of its sense and power. In the case of the Antiracists and from a secular point of view, McWhorter critiques this dynamic as '*Elect-ism*.' In the view of the Cain and Abel dynamic, Abel must be erased.

Shenvi and Sawyer argue that Antiracism is a strain of liberalism. The early narrative theologians noted the weaknesses that liberalism would leave in the ancient story and the life of the Christian whom it was meant to define:

> To do ethics from the perspective of those ''out of control'' means Christians must find the means to make clear to both the oppressed and oppressor that the cross determines the meaning of history.'' Christians should thus provide imaginative alternatives for social policy as they are released from the ''necessities'' of those that would control the world in the name of security. For to be out of control means Christians can risk trusting in gifts, as they have no reason to deny the contingent character of our existence. Liberalism, in its many forms and versions, presupposes that society can be organized without any narrative that is commonly held to be true. As a result it tempts us to believe that freedom and rationality are independent of narrative—i.e., we are free to the extent that we have no story. Liberalism is, therefore, particularly pernicious to the extent it prevents us from understanding how deeply we are captured by its account of existence (Hauerwas 1980: 11-12).

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[5] In March 2012, Michael Waters suggested in the Huffington Post national news outlet that the Christian sacraments be altered to honour Trayvon Martin's death and highlight racial injustice in America by replacing bread and wine with Skittles candy and Arizona Iced Tea, objects the teen had purchased before his untimely death at the hands of neighbourhood vigilante George Zimmerman. He wrote: "But what do Skittles, iced tea and the hoodie now symbolize? What greater meaning do they possess? How can these objects form a new liturgy, not only for reflecting upon the life and death of Trayvon Martin, but for all who seek to "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God" (Micah 6:8)? Let Skittles, iced tea, and the hoodie become symbols of truth, inspiration, and comfort for a new generation of protesters against the on-going crucifixion of innocent flesh at the hands of a corrupt system of oppression and marginalization that has for too long tortured the masses and tainted our country's legacy." Several progressive congregations took up the practice as a form of protest (Waters, 2012).

Ultimately, the success of the dominant Americentric approaches - nationalism and liberationism - depends on the exclusion of at least one ethnicity or demographic from the American experiment; deep hostility is displayed toward those who subscribe to a coherent narrative that refuses to be co-opted by other, lesser stories. Cain the militant coloniser and liberator both meet in the place where ethnicity and class consciousness meet self-righteousness. They require an extreme epistemological and ethical amendment to manifest biblical definitions of the covenantal people of God, that great multitude from every nation described in John's revelation:

> After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'[1] (Revelation 21:9-10).

Inside and outside of the institutional church, establishing a social, cultural, and political order that serves one's local Baals is the ongoing distraction and obsession of Cain. This perpetual historical quest has left kingdom-minded Christians to search for others who will return to the simplicity of the New Testament to weather Cain's rising hostility toward ethics and epistemology that honour a Christian identity, made possible through union with Christ and only through him, as primary.

7.3 *Quo Vadis,* Cain and Abel? Contemporary Applications

As I've completed this thesis, I've travelled three times to another region of the Caribbean near St. Thomas where the Christian church lives amidst similar dynamics endured by the Moravians. The goal of these visits has been to build trust among Christian network leaders to return and study the Cain and Abel premise operating in their region. This tiny island nation has been dominated by a Marxist worldview and a Communistic government for sixty-plus years. Its government has historically been hostile and violent toward non-state-sanctioned religion. Despite the church's period of living underground and at high risk for many decades, in recent times, Christian communities have made themselves visible in society and have made significant strides in changing cultural perceptions of Christianity. Already isolated geographically and by international sanctions, their country was isolated even further by the global pandemic of 2019. Tourism ceased; without its main industry, the nation struggled even more profoundly as basic supply chains dried up.

Hundred-year-old factories that once allowed them to produce their own goods deteriorated beyond repair. As the pandemic shut them off from the rest of the world, the island's Christian communities that had once been siloed came together in an interdenominational network of traditionally biblical Protestant churches to provide spiritual and material assistance for their neighbours. Much like the St. Thomas Moravians two hundred years before them, they began with united corporate prayer. Soon they saw evidence of emboldening and renewal among their local Christian communities.

According to the leaders of this interdenominational network, the local church is in a 'very harsh context, a neighbourhood where the rate of violence is high and housing, feeding, and living conditions, in general, are critical. God has placed us here, and we work focused on his will, witnessing Christ with works of compassion and sharing his word.' (Conference on Worldview and Ethics, 2023). This is far more robust than a social program, however; the network 'trains everyone to be a leader,' and participants in their discipleship programs span generations, ethnicities, and economic classes.

That is not to say that they are not still without harassment or pressure from their surrounding culture; they are still regarded with suspicion by their government, which looks the other way as they reach into 98,000 households on the island with the Gospel and provisions. Like the Moravians, there is also a strong spiritual oppression that arises from the traditional religions on the island: Abakuá, Ifa and Orisha worship, and Santeria (a syncretic blend of Catholicism and Yoruban traditional religion) all present spiritual, cultural, and political obstacles. The traditional religions were the only government-sanctioned religions on the island from the 1950s to the late 1990s, and so alliances were formed between Marxist ideals of utopianism and the worship of traditional ancestors and West African deities that reject a covenantal approach to the bible's ancient story.

During a recent conference on worldview and ethics in the country, one leader remarked that in addition to being a high-risk society for a biblically orthodox Christian,

> [This country's] reality is challenging for everyone working within the church. All of us here are responsible for finding solutions to help and bring about a better society. And we are ostracised by that same society, like 80 or 90% because there is a lot of syncretism in [our] culture. So it's very important to reach the heart of the culture in observing and acting and understanding how the culture is moving in a moment so we can renew the hearts of the individual, so that we have proper understanding. Marxist philosophy forces us to deal with the foundations of cultural belief and syncretism … there are different ways that people see things (Subject B, Conference on Worldview and Ethics, 2023).

Another young leader observed:

> If you ask someone here if they believe in Jesus as Lord, the majority of people say yes. But in their own way. And so first, someone like a pastor, you have to do the work of helping them remove the lies of official things with the power of God, and bring forth the repentance of Jesus Christ. For

example, when we say that it's 'like illumination - coming to knowledge of Jesus' that helps us turn from sin, we know that it's only repentance that can help someone turn away from their sin. Another point is that [unlike] Monism and other worldviews, we know that we need daily communion with God. When the response from within the ideology is that the answers to our problems and mankind's ills and evils lie within man, we must answer no – the answer is in daily communion with the Lord (Subject A, Conference on Worldview and Ethics, 2023).

Their economic conditions have only worsened since the world reopened post-pandemic, making the network's ministry essential to survival in the city and on the island overall. A third leader's spouse lost their high-ranking party appointment upon a dramatic conversion to Christianity during the country's most repressive days. This leader remarked, 'I have asked myself lately, 'Why are our lives so hard? I can only conclude that it is to show forth the glory of God.' (Subject C, Conference on Worldview and Ethics, 2023).

This network's impact on their culture seems fertile ground for continued research to test the limits of the Cain and Abel dynamic, particularly in interviewing the hundreds who have left both the State party and traditional African religions and are now leaders in this Christian network. Also of interest is the relationship between the church and its communities that have openly displayed Cain's legacy: traditional African religions, an ideologically Marxist culture and government, the global Antiracism movement, the Movement for Black Lives (Black Lives Matter), and others seem to find a nexus in this Caribbean nation. As their ideological ideas are exported and welcomed into American society and the American church, perhaps this island nation's context can help the American church find purpose and understanding in the decline of the church in the West in that it is necessary and useful in purifying, driving, and exposing the true kingdom line of obedience and sacrifice as Zinzendorf argued. Through studying Abel-oriented communities and movement through this Augustinian premise, one can analyse their methods of endurance, simultaneously rediscover the kingdom line of the ancient story, and more intentionally develop the heart attitude that resembles the faithful saints' posture in the early church.

7.4   Christ, the Greater Abel

Augustine uses a Cain and Abel premise to establish a typology that highlights Christ as the true and greater Abel who embodies the ideals of the city of God, and who provides the ultimate sacrifice that reconciles humanity to himself. In *City of God*, the theologian's typological interpretation of the story of these two brothers lays groundwork for the larger theme of two cities in conflict and the ultimate victory of the *City of God*. Augustine's

reflections on the two brothers moves us from the temporal realm to the eternal through Christ as the Greater Abel who perfects Abel's innocence, and who satisfies the injustice and unearned suffering committed against him by his brother. Christ is central to the endurance of his people in the earthly city, and their fulfilment and consummation in the heavenly city, by framing Christ as the Greater Abel.[4]

This project has made use of Augustine's original Cain and Abel typology. It centred its definitions around a traditionally Reformed understanding that the story of the people of God, summed up in the covenantal sentence, 'I will be your God, and you will be my people.' This statement is fulfilled, kept, and consummated through union with Christ. It is an identity-bearing promise embedded in the thoughts, habits, and priorities of God's people. Within the ancient story is a sub-story of two brothers in the book of Genesis. I used Augustine's understanding of their relationship as a type of two historical communities defined by the habits and priorities of the legacies of Cain and Abel.

I also highlighted that the legacy of Cain carried a degenerative propensity to hostility and destruction toward communities that worshipped after the pattern of doxological obedience, or communities of Abel. I argued throughout that this premise provides a way of understanding hostility, violence, and antagonism toward the people of God. I used a theological approach to ethnohistory to present the St. Thomas Moravian congregation as a cultural and theological example of the ongoing historical dynamic between the two brothers: one bearing the character of a false and destructive narrative, and the other bearing the weight of a narrative that can be considered true.

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[4] In his own working through of Scripture's covenantal restatements, Augustine often notes the supremacy of Christ in his fulfillment of the promise for the people of God. See Augustine, *City of God* 14.28.

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The early narrative theologians argued for the foundation of a truthful narrative in the Christian's faith, life, and ethics:

> No society can be just or good that is built on falsehood. The first task of Christian social ethics, therefore, is not to make the ''world'' better or more _ just, but to help Christian people form their community consistent with their conviction that the story of Christ is a truthful account of our existence. For as H. R. Niebuhr argued, only when we know ''what is going on,'' do we know ''what we should do,'' and Christians believe that we learn most decisively ''"what is going on'' in the cross and resurrection of Christ (Hauerwas 1980: 10).

The covenantal community likewise understands that false idols wish to 'colonise our minds' (Vanhoozer 2019: 148). Idols create false teachers, who in turn create false communities, using temporal and often abusive means to bring about the peace that only the kingdom of God can. These communities, living after the pattern of primal Cain, display their primary orientation through Yahweh-hatred, foolishness, and destruction of self, and of others, resulting in persecution of communities that do not worship their idols. The historical repetition of Cainian degeneration that Count von Zinzendorf outlined for institutions both religious and secular, as well as for the human heart, is a continual process that appears in every age. Likewise predictable is the continual rise and presence of communities of Abel in the form of the invisible church, to work and worship in obedience and truth. This set-apart, other cultural and other political reality that bases their existence on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, will live in faithful obedience at a temporal cost to themselves for eternal gain.

Also sure in every age is Cain's hatred toward Abel, reflecting the hatred of Satan toward Christ and causing persecution of the saints that God uses and redeems for his kingdom purpose.

Some churches, organisations, and individuals in our current age who identify with Christ are publicly rejecting the idols of our culture. They are developing their own cultural standards and litmus tests for 'doxological faithfulness.'

As these communities emerge afresh in my current context, it is difficult to define 'obedience and faithfulness' in ethical practices for every context and age. Is it fidelity to the created order and a binary understanding of gender? Is it care for the poor or creation care? Is it affirming life and saving babies from destruction? Is it resisting assisted suicide as a solution to poverty and overpopulation? Or is it as simple as fidelity to ethics produced by identity and ownership to a covenantal understanding of the bible's overarching story, that coheres from beginning to middle to end, as it was for the New Testament saints and the St. Thomas Moravians of the eighteenth century?

The Cain and Abel premise highlights a starting point to define the practices that inform who we are: prayer, baptism, and the Lord's supper. These practices tell us which story is the Christian's to claim, and then live. In them is given a standard of identity that lasts from generation to generation, through the ancient, truthful narrative that harmonises from the beginning to the middle, and through the end of the believer's life and beyond human history. With our 'other-political,' 'other-cultural' identity as a storied sacrament, the Christian has a starting point that guides and directs our character that has been lived, told, and fulfilled by Christ himself, appropriate for every age and context it meets; this, even as the storied sacraments provide supernatural strength to endure Cain's persecution.

When the prophets railed with truth against Israel and Judah's rebellious spiritual leaders, their covenantal nation had fallen into a deep slumber and their consciences were seared against the call to repent. When Christ appeared in the flesh and walked the earth, the religious institutions were not only in a deep slumber, but in a state of Cainian rebellion and arrogance against those who wished to worship in spirit and truth. When Christ died, the early believers hid in fear of their surrounding Cains and were emboldened to live vibrantly before them after Christ was resurrected and glorified. When the Protestant Reformation fell into internal squabbling of its own, Jane Lead took pen in hand to compose the earliest ideas for the Philadelphian Ideals to reset believers toward the early church and the Scripture to resist the state of corruption. Zinzendorf and the Herrnhuters were in earnest prayer and repentance from Cainian orientations of their own when they experienced the Holy Spirit's quickening that would lead them to the African Christians in St. Thomas. They were kept faithful by practising and rehearsing the ancient story in the sacraments in a posture of doxological praise and, according to their own testimony, through finding their primary identity in Christ and remaining in Christ-like submission at their most high-pressure moments. The persecution brought unexpected growth,

at a time when leaving the house of Cain came at a high personal cost. None of these communities performed Christianity perfectly, but the ancient story empowered them to remember Whose they were, and to perform it faithfully.

This study has presented communities of Abel as the people of God called the 'invisible church,' showing that the persevering church is also a revived church. These communities show small historical snapshots: when the Spirit awakens deadened hearts, devotion, doxological obedience and faithfulness result. In Acts 2:40-47 we read of their obedience to Christ's story, and most significantly to the storied sacraments that bear their story.[6] This study has presented the ancient story and the sacraments as a tool of discernment to know whether the story followed is false, or true.

The Christian community is bound through Christ in a relationship that is intimate, Christ-centred, physical, and distinct. No other earthly relationships compare or are bound up in such a cosmic, historical, and narrative-based union. Through this unique relationship, the covenantal promise is fulfilled: "I will be your God, and you will be my people,' a statement which harmonises nations, tribes, and tongues (Revelation 7:12).

The elect 'nation, tongue, and tribe' aspects of the promise are also informative of the covenantal story, particularly in introducing how the story intrudes into this realm from the one that is to come. That nation, tribes and tongues are specifically mentioned is significant to reversing the Genesis curse brought about by Adam and Woman in the garden. Not only are these to be expressed justly and rightly through the church in the nasty-now-and-now, but they will also be made just and right in the sweet-by-and-by of glory.

Firstly, the nations are the context where both the church and broader humanity, are oppressed by broken and imperfect cultures and systems of government; yet it is also the touchpoint where the people of God are called to stand out as God's 'other-political' and 'other cultural' reality.

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[6] And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation." So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:40-47.

Secondly, tongues bring about the ability of the people of God to tell the covenantal story not just in deed but in Word, and particularly in the heart language of each culture the story encounters; language is the place where the Christian's ethics and epistemology match. Finally, to speak of tribes is also to speak of fallenness and redemption; unity in Christ does not *cancel* ethnic, tribal, or societal associations, or even our familial and blood relations, but offers a redeemed, whole, and perfected expression of them. Though they are not cancelled, they are reprioritised. Association with Christ and the new community becomes ultimate through a Spirit-wrought uniqueness centred only in him, and there is no comparison to other earthly alliances. In sum, Christ is the Greater Abel:

> But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:22:24).

The centrality and superiority of Christ give the Christian community its 'other-cultural' and 'other-political' nature; it is he who makes such a community possible.

This thesis has argued that Abel provides the ethical ethos of obedience, the way of Christ, and life and endurance through the cross. But what of Cain, who charts his own path through life in rebellion? Is there no hope for Cain in the ancient story?

To hearken back to the discussion in chapters one and six of this thesis, the Cain and Abel dynamic is tied to a two-Adam Christology and the natures of each Adam. Paul speaks of a people who are reflective of the nature of Adam (or primal Cain), versus those reflective of Christ (primal Abel) (Romans 5, Romans 6). What's of interest to this thesis is the hostility that Cain holds toward Abel, which is only relieved through Christ the second and final Adam. Paul elaborates on these two orientations throughout Romans and 1 Corinthians, writing that while we were once dead in Adam, we are now made alive in Christ (1 Corinthians 15). He repeats this perspective on these two eternally connected communities, bound up in these two lives, and the dynamic is repeated explicitly in the language of Romans 5, Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 15.

The conflict that began in the garden story marked the division between the houses of wisdom and folly. The battle between the two orientations is not just an external struggle between those inside and outside the household of faith; it is in the struggle Abel that wars within everyone as we struggle with ethical choices that lead to destruction and those that lead to life. The St. Thomas Moravians chose to address the struggle in the form of discipleship from foolishness to wisdom for all members of the household of

faith, using the sacraments to test themselves regularly to know which story they followed; are they reflective of a life that is dead in Adam like their surrounding culture, or one that is alive in Christ like the kingdom line of the faithful?

Our mystical union with Christ manifests recognizable qualities of the kingdom-minded church such as faithfulness, obedience, wisdom, prioritisation of eternal values, and endurance amidst external marginalization and persecution. This creates recognition of the kingdom line across eras, epochs, and linguistic lines. In the case of the development of the Moravians' Philadelphian ideals, recognition was based on a shared set of priorities determined by the ancient story, and reflective of the priorities of the New Testament church. For Paul, life-giving kingdom ethics, constant repentance, and obedience are tied directly to this recognition. Paul's priority in these first few verses is for how the church should care for those within the 'the household of Faith.' It's a priority that remains consistent throughout the New Testament, and the Holy Spirit makes it possible for it to remain a priority throughout history so that our brothers and sisters living under these conditions today can still make sense of these Scriptures in *their* context of persecution.

The New Testament writers knew all about the cultural and social concerns of the day, and mercy ministry held great value. Like many Christian communities today, they too faced poverty, class injustice, and right-to-life issues, homelessness, racial and ethnic disharmony, misogyny, slavery and human trafficking, human rights violations, issues surrounding biblical sexuality, arts and science, politics, or cultural influence; this was all a part of the Roman landscape. Social action and concern for neighbour was an outgrowth of the Christian community that had been transformed by Christ. Bringing God's transformative Word to bear in these areas was, indeed, part of their alternative witness here on earth. Due to the rising persecution in Rome, there was a discomfort with this community that was making people change their affections from what were 'acceptable' cultural and political practices. The cultures surrounding the early church were alarmed to see individuals transform away from how society and the state defined them, and away from how it required they behave within the structure of society. Tension grew between the culture of the world and the culture of Christ. Because of this rising resentment against the household of faith, Paul gives priority to the needs of the people of God. Spiritually speaking, union with Christ created the mystical oneness discussed previously. Practically speaking, households of faith did not receive affection or preference from their surrounding culture.

Paul writes from the position of having been both Cain and Abel, persecutor and persecuted. Expanding on Hodge's exposition of the life of Paul discussed in chapter six, prior to the Damascus Road encounter with Christ, Paul personally hunted and scourged the people of God. After his encounter with the resurrected Christ, has was scourged himself. Paul has passionately lived both orientations, that of Cain and that of Abel through Christ. Paul makes it clear that there are differences between two communities; two perspectives on life, with vastly different worldviews: those in Adam who don't claim Jesus as Lord, and those in Christ who claim Him as their own. I agree with Augustine that there has been tension between the two since the foundation of the world that continues today; the religion of Cain bears a hostility toward Abel for his doxological obedience. Paul shows that Christ offers hope for those who practice the religion of Cain, and for those who may even be hostile toward those in Christ. In the context of anticipating hostility and persecution of their own, Christ explains to his disciples that he will be the centre of this hope for Cain, and that the hope will be expressed through the household of faith:

> But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-36).

Paul echoes Christ's words with his own, expressed through his own life and practice:

> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:14-21).

The purpose of exploring these texts is not to advocate for or against pacifism, but rather to highlight the redemptive potential and responsibility that an Abel-oriented community has toward the legacy of Cain. Although Cain persecuted and murdered Abel for his obedience toward God in the earliest days of the Genesis recording, Yahweh was

still merciful to Cain. Paul, through Christ, extends this same mercy to those who live after Cain's pattern, exhorting those in the household of faith to treat their persecutors with mercy. Those who follow Christ are not to repay evil for evil, *because* they are made in the image of God and deserving of dignity and honour; because the Christian is new-made in the image of Christ, this is their task.

Paul calls for a high view of God, his mercy, and a high view of the people of God by calling the Abels of the world to still bless the Cains, showing mercy just as God did outside of the garden, even as they are persecuting. There well may be an Abel waiting to be liberated inside, *just* as Paul himself was delivered from ethnic and citizenship idolatry. This educated and devout man to God and country (some would say extremist) called himself a Jew's Jew; circumcised on the eighth day according to the law, but also recognized himself as a Roman citizen's citizen. all of which he counted loss for the sake of his primary identity in Christ, and a primary association with those who believed in him as the promised Messiah.[7] Paul's exhortation to the Galatians is that a part of their priority in citizenship as an 'other-cultural' and 'other-political' entity includes Abels first loving the household of faith, and then blessing the Cains who resent the transformative Christ among them.

All is not lost for Cain; there is hope for those who follow his violent pattern yet come to the end of themselves. In Genesis chapter four *before* Cain slew his brother, God called him to a higher place with a new opportunity for obedience; regrettably, for both brothers, the path to obedience and conciliation was not taken. Yet Paul's transformed life shows that God still holds out mercy for those who leave off Cain's rebellion, and that he redeems the harm that is done.

Because the Lord declares, 'I the Lord love justice,' the pursuit of just communities, societies and even nations is a noble and biblical cause.[8] However, as this thesis has argued, faithful Christian communities operate under a different kind of politics and a different culture. The people of God are not a-political or anti-political; the Christian is not called to a monastic rejection of culture; it is a living 'other-culture' altogether. The lives and service of Daniel, Nehemiah, and Esther offer examples of Christian faithfulness inside of temporal political systems; both the Old and New Testaments offer models of Christ-anticipators and Christ-followers actively engaged in their surrounding

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[7] Phillippians 3, Acts 22:24-23:10.
[8] Isaiah 61:8.

cultures. The question is not *whether* the set-apart community engages, but *on what terms'* does it engage. Thus, it can be said that theirs is a *different* politic based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and based on the realities of creation, fall, redemption and glory. They represent an altogether *different* culture, one based on the covenantal story.

Temporal politics, ethnicity, and culture are important, but not ultimate. For the enduring believer, Christ, his kingdom, and his people are ultimate. Such priorities provide an alternative witness that changes first individuals, then families, then communities, and sometimes - nations, nudging them closer to the kingdom reality and ethics than they had previously been. This thesis expounded on man's natural Cainian orientation in institutions, governments, and cultures. This thesis argues that man's tendency is to bend the moral arc of the universe not toward the cosmic justice of Christ, but toward himself. In doing so, man makes himself into a god of the current cultural moment, enslaved to his selfish orientation. Christ in his supremacy bends the arc of the universe toward himself and his sovereignty; not only toward his perfect justice, but also toward his generous mercy for those who are found in him. Here, Cain finds the perfect absolution: restored communion, community, and a perfected kingdom that he once tried to create in his own strength. In his conversion to Christianity, he also finds himself suffering at the hands of the temporal ideology he once held dear; in that condition he finds the strength to endure from Christ and his community.

The covenantal story is an oral, promise-based, narrative that coheres from its beginning to its middle, and through its end. Through Cain and Abel, it provides a story within that story for understanding the hostility that those outside of the household of faith feel toward those within it. Throughout history, revived communities awaken to tell, live, and proclaim the ancient story that performs - at cost - the ethics of a 'set apart' kingdom, an 'other-cultural,' 'other-political' reality like no other it encounters. These communities hold the power to both indict and invite the individuals and cultures it meets; indict cultures for their shortcomings, injustice, and sin, but invite individuals, households, and communities to join the kingdom line. It also provides, through the sacraments in particular, a way of understanding which story its adherents may be following, in that the sacraments carry the covenantal story that is unique to the household of faith. Indeed, the community has the privilege and responsibility to proclaim this unique and ancient story through the simple, story-bearing practices of baptism and the Lord's supper is one way to pass on our other-cultural identity and maintain it in the heart

and mind. If Christian communities are to be an 'other-cultural' and 'other political' witness that bears no idols, then they must know and practice the story well, continually rediscovering how each of our stories fit into it and bear out life-making ethics in anticipation of the coming, perfected kingdom. As the Covenantal promise informs, the redemptive-historical pattern of creation, fall, redemption and glory guides and prepares such communities to suffer well, and for the right ends and reason that likewise comport with the story and the Author's intentions, that is Christ. This is the 'life' portion of the 'life, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ:' the life of Abel, obedience to Yahweh and commitment to Christ now expressed in empowered unity.

Such faithful historical and contemporary Christian populations teach theologians, historians, and laypersons what it is to be 'other-cultural' and 'other-political' among all other cultures on earth. They likewise expose a kingdom line through history that reiterates an essential function of the story. They serve as a reminder that God has, is, and will continue to fulfil the promise made to Adam and Woman in the garden, keeping a people for himself to worship around his throne. After the enemy of his people is no more, the saints will see the grand covenantal promise fulfilled before their eyes:

I will be your God, and you will be my people.

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