

## From racial profiling to condemnation and abuse of power. A biblical case of hermeneutics from the minorities in the United States

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### **Abstract**

The present study analyzes the socio-historical context and setting narrated in the canonical episode of Paul's arrest and his treatment in Jerusalem according to the narrative of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29. The pericopes become the fundamental platform through which it is possible to present both a hermeneutical and theological interpretation of the liabilities and ultimate consequences of racial profiling, especially when it is exercised by the civil authorities, an institutionalized power, or a general culture. The diachronic and synchronic exegetical analysis of the pericopes are combined with the methodological approaches of semantics and practical theology that led to the elucidations of an applied political theology implied in the racial profiling and discriminatory acts committed against the African American and Hispanic communities. The practical theological analysis focuses on the diegetic framework of the famous apologetic speech of Paul which has been underestimated in the hermeneutical studies to date. Therefore, the biblical text becomes the source domain from which is possible to determine the behavioral patterns that become alive in the pragmatic dimension of any racial profiling manifested in the modern American milieu.

**Key words:** Assumption. Judgment. Condemnation. Racial profiling. Institutionalized power.

### **Resumen**

El presente estudio analiza los eventos narrados en el contexto socio-histórico descrito en el episodio del arresto de Pablo y su tratamiento judicial en Jerusalén según la narración de Hechos 21:27-40a y 22: 23-29. Las perícopas mencionadas se convierten en la plataforma fundamental a través de la cual es posible presentar una interpretación tanto hermenéutica como teológica de las responsabilidades y consecuencias últimas del perfil racial, especialmente cuando es ejercido por las autoridades civiles, un poder institucionalizado o una cultura general. El análisis exegético diacrónico y sincrónico de las perícopas se combina con los enfoques metodológicos de la semántica y la teología

práctica que llevaron a las argumentaciones de una teología política aplicada a los perfiles raciales y actos discriminatorios cometidos contra las comunidades afroamericanas e hispanas de los Estados Unidos. El análisis teológico-práctico bajo el aspecto del perfil racial se centra en el marco diegético del arresto y discurso apologético de Pablo, que ha sido subestimado en los estudios hermenéuticos hasta la fecha. Por lo tanto, el texto bíblico se convierte en el “source domain” a partir del cual es posible determinar los patrones de comportamiento que cobran vida en la dimensión pragmática de cualquier perfil racial manifestado en el contexto estadounidense moderno.

**Palabras clave: Prejuicio. Juicio. Condena. Perfil racial. Poder institucionalizado.**

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### **Premise**

The present study analyzes the socio-historical context and setting narrated in the canonical episode of Paul’s arrest and his treatment in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29), as the fundamental platform from which to present a hermeneutical and theological interpretation of the liabilities and ultimate consequences of racial profiling, especially when it is exercised by the civil authorities. Following the hermeneutical principles of Biblical pragmatic analysis, it is essential to establish a dialogical or circular relationship between the message conveyed by the aforementioned biblical text and the human experience found within the black and brown communities of United States. Their personal experiences become the keys to interpreting the anthropological reality of the biblical author who tried to describe the human experience of racial profiling that becomes a universal behavioral pattern. This pragmatic reality of profiling and discrimination has come alive among the existential circumstances of the minorities, making the biblical texts meaningful and reflective mirrors for such interpretation and meaning.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, these biblical episodes embody a paradigm of the racial profiling that has been the reality for some marginalized communities in the United States which led to the incarceration of a large number of African Americans and Hispanics. Accordingly, this essay will present a theological biblical analysis having a distinct focus which concentrates on the ethnic perspectives of the Black and Brown communities as living *loci theologici* through which the biblical text comes to be alive.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Paul Regan, “Hans-Georg Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics: Concepts of reading, understanding and interpretation,” *META: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, vol. IV, no. 2 (2012): 286-287; Massimo Grilli, Maurizio Guidi, and Elzbieta Obara, *Comunicación y pragmática en la exégesis bíblica* (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2018), 25-37; Jean Grondin, “What is the hermeneutical circle?” in *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics*. Edited by N. Keane and C. Lawn (Oxford, Blackwell, 2016), 299-300.

The development of the aforementioned theme is articulated in three general sections according to the methodological path of narrative criticism, sociological biblical approach, and practical theology: 1) The Sitz im Leben and theological themes implied in the canonical text of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29, 2) The biblical paradigm of racial profiling manifested in the official legal/judicial exercise of power at the street level to African-Americans and Hispanics, 3) Racial profiling and the Lukan notion of Christianity: a proposal of healing to our American communities.

### **I. The Sitz im Leben and theological themes implied in the canonical text of Acts 21:27-40a and 22:23-29**

The entire episode starts in Acts 21:27 and finishes in Acts 22:29, since Acts 22:30 shows a drastic change of chronological (Τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον) and spatial (τὸ συνέδριον, καὶ καταγαγὼν τὸν Παῦλον ἔστησεν εἰς αὐτούς) settings in reference to the previous episode.<sup>2</sup>

Following the criteria of the narrative criticism, suitable to the nature of the literary material presented in Acts 21:27-22:29, one may distinguish the following sub-sections of the episode that shows the literary structure<sup>3</sup>:

#### A. First Part: narrative section: violence and arrest of Paul

- a) Riot in the Temple: Acts 21:27-30<sup>4</sup>
- b) Arrest of Paul: Acts 21:31-40

#### B. Second Part: Speech of Paul: Acts 22:1-21

#### A'. Third Part: narrative section: violence and arrest of Paul

- a) Violence of the Jewish community: Acts 22:22-23
- b) Paul under the Roman authority: Acts 22:24-29

According to the stylistic and dramatic criteria manifested in the narrative analysis of the pericope, it is possible to accept this concentric structure in which the central part of it corresponds to the main stylistic change that goes from the

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<sup>2</sup> Bruce also proposes the end of the pericope in Acts 22:29, indicating that Acts 22:30 implies a different section in the narrative that opens to the self defense of Paul developed in Acts 23. However, Bruce does not mention the criteria of the change of place and time manifested in the narrative of the events. Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 422-423.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John H. Hayes and Carl R. Holladay, *Biblical Exegesis* (Louisville, KY - London, UK: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), 95-96.

<sup>4</sup> The Temple is the spatial and religious setting, around which the events of the riot and the arrest of Paul are taking place. Cf. Darrell Block, *Acts. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT* (Grand Rapids: MI: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2007), 651; Frederick F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 1988), 408-409.

voice of the narrator to the voice of the protagonist in the story.<sup>5</sup> Paul's defense speech portrays the characteristic of an intradiegetic story of his conversion combined with his self-understanding of the Jewish history of salvation that reaches its summit in the event of Christ.<sup>6</sup> The main theological themes and Greco-Roman style of the kerygmatic proclamation of Paul in this particular episode is undoubtedly a rich source of academic studies and rhetorical analysis. However, the focus of the present study is centered on the diegetic framework (A and A') in which the narrator describes the settings and the main events that portray the cause and circumstances of the hostile attitude taken towards the protagonist and the role of the Roman authority of the time.<sup>7</sup>

From the narrative sections A and A', the reader can observe fundamental elements that exemplify a case of profiling, judgment, and subjective condemnation of a person "before" the accused individual or victim could have an opportunity to face a fair trial. The sequence aforementioned is substantiated by the brief analysis of the social settings, vocabulary, and succession of actions manifested in the diegetic context manifested in A and A'.

### ***1.1. Social Settings manifested in the first and third part of the pericope***

The narrative analysis of the diegetic framework of A and A' indicates a setting that functions as the "temporal and spatial setting" or background stage upon which the main actions take place.<sup>8</sup> However, it is essential to discover in the pericope other settings that may not be so evident, but nevertheless significant in the analysis of the *Sitz im Leben* of the events. I am referring specifically to "two social settings" manifested in the diegetic framework, presented to the readers as the first narrative level.<sup>9</sup> These social settings become the door of the world behind the text and invite the reader to enter and understand the complexity and functionality of the political institutions, social status, economic systems, social customs, and general cultural and contextual elements of the time. The social setting offers valuable hermeneutical tools for the pragmatic application of

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Jean Louis Ska, *Our fathers have Told Us. Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives* (Roma: Editrice Pontificio Instituto Biblico, 2000), 43-44; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 57-58.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ska, *Our fathers have Told Us*, 47-49; Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972, 1980), 229.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Daniel Marguerat and Yvan Bourquin, *Per Leggere i Racconti Biblici* (Roma: Borla, 2001), 88-89.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament* (Grand rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2005), 87; Marguerat and Bourquin, *Racconti Biblici*, 86-87; Mark A. Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 70; David Rhoads and Donald Mitchie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 63.

<sup>9</sup> The Lukan author presents the events from a zero point of view, allowing the readers to infer the motives and the dispositions of the *forum internum* of the characters. See Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 127. Marguerat and Bourquin, *Racconti Biblici*, 41-43. 75-75.

specific biblical notions to modern problematic situations. The life setting of a biblical pericope can become the foundational hermeneutical apparatus to elucidate and judge actual situations of life that may reflect behavioral paradigms that also could cause a similar disruption of harmony in the modern American society.<sup>10</sup>

Judaism is the first social setting identified in the pericope. The notion of Judaism is not only a simplistic understanding of a religious system, but is also a category that implies ethnicity, culture, and *weltanschauung* from which politics, business, finances, family, i.e., every single dimension of the Jewish life was understood from the essential parameters established in the Tanak. Even though Judaism is inserted into a predominately Greco-Roman culture during this time, the Jewish identity kept unto itself, i.e., as a distinctive entity of race, culture, and religion that could not be separated.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Judaism develops into a hostile social setting through which it deems Christianity to be a heretical movement that was attempting to destroy the truth of the revelation of Yhwh, i.e., the religious aspect of the notion of Judaism. These intrinsic dimensions of Judaism explain why some Jews from Asia (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀσίας Ἰουδαῖοι Acts 21:27) created the riot against Paul.<sup>12</sup> The voice of the narrator explicitly indicates at least two motivations of the hostile attitude: i) the problem of religion, since they claim Paul proclaims a heretical message regarding the Israelite faith (Acts 21:28), and ii) a problem due to ethnicity, since the accusers say Paul is bringing some *goyim* into the sacred Temple (Acts 21:28-29). The social setting of the Jews exposes a double discrimination towards Paul based on religion and ethnicity. They are the same two elements that speak loudly into the life experiences of some minority communities in the United States today.

The Roman authority of the soldiers reveals the second social setting. The Roman figures embody the Greco-Roman world of the gentiles which is also a self-standing complex category that simultaneously implies ethnicity, religion, and a very distinct world view of its own. The reader perceives that the Greco-Roman soldiers are gentiles who do not belong to the Jewish ethnicity, who speak a different language and have a very different belief system, commonly called paganism, that is not compatible with either the Jewish nor to the Christian point of view. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the Greco-Roman culture tolerated different cultural and religious practices than their own, and sometimes

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 87-88; Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 74-75.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Mauro Pesce, *Da Gesù al cristianesimo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2011), 145-146; Denise K. Buell and Caroline J. Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation: The Rhetoric of Race and Ethnicity in Paul," *JBL* no. 123/2 (2004): 240.

<sup>12</sup> At this point of Acts' narrative, the hostility of the Jews comes to a climax. The Jewish hostility is constant in Paul's life: e.g., Acts 13:50; 14:2,5,19; 17:5-9; 18:12-17. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles. A New translation with Introduction and Commentary*. The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 696.

even assimilating them, while maintaining its own Greco-Roman characteristics that explicitly indicates they belong to a different and yet self-standing culture, ethnicity, and religion.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the Greco-Roman culture has not yet explicitly gone against Christianity as a religion, as it would become, starting from the year 64 AD., with the Emperor Nero. However, the attitude of these Roman soldiers was equally hostile towards the person of Paul in Acts 21:30-36 and 22:24-25.

They certainly intervene not only into the middle of the riot against Paul, but also without the benefit of doubt they arrested a person who has been abused by the crowd. Even after Paul's own speech, the Roman authority proceeded to physical punishment, assuming the guilt of someone, who, even after defending himself was never given the right to face trial. This common Roman practice was disrupted however, by the fear of their consequential punishment once Paul's Roman citizenship was revealed. The notion of social status and citizenship suddenly gave greater weight to the integrity and basic human and civil rights of the victim that otherwise would have been disregarded and annihilated by the assumptions and generalizations of those who had a position of authority and power.

According to the social settings previously described, I will be able to now present the behavioral paradigm of these patterns inferred from the respective attitude-mindsets of the Jews and the Roman soldiers manifested in the narrative.

### **1.2. Assumption, Judgment, and Condemnation by the Jews**

The Jews from Asia, on the seventh day of Paul's ritual purification, saw him in the Temple and made claims against him. The charges against Paul, according to his accusers are basically two:

- a) Paul's teachings are heretical and therefore against the Torah, the Temple, and the people of Israel.
- b) Paul has brought Greek gentiles into the Temple area, defiling the sacred place. The term used to indicate the defiling of the Temple is the verb κοινώω<sup>14</sup> in indicative perfect tense (κεκοίνωκεν), emphasizing that the action performed in the past continues to carry on its consequences into the present day of the speakers.<sup>15</sup> The judgment and condemnation in this case happen almost simultaneously. It is the attitude and approach that deny the accused person all

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Mauro Pesce, *Da Gesù al cristianesimo*, 146-147; Buell and Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation," 240.

<sup>14</sup> The most common translations of this verb in English are to violate ritual holiness, to make something unclean, to defile, to profane, to desecrate, to pollute, to make something unacceptable. Cf. Friederich Hauck, "κοινώω," *TDNT* III, 809; BAGD, "κοινώω," 438.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Blass-Debrunner, § 342.4.

the basic civil and human rights of partaking in a fair trial, that ironically, are also required and established in the Torah (see Deut 19:16-21).<sup>16</sup>

The author of Acts uses the verb νομίζω<sup>17</sup> in imperfect tense (ἐνόμιζον in Acts 21:29) indicating a permanent attitude that remains as a constant mindset in time, namely, the Jews, Paul's accusers, were not willing to change their mind in respect to this "assumption" that does not correspond to the reality or factual deeds. In other words, the accusation and simultaneous condemnation of the victim is based not on actual facts but on the "supposition" (νομίζω) that the person committed a grave crime without any consideration given to the remote possibility of the innocence of the accused.

After determining the "assumption or presupposition" (νομίζω) based on their hate and conspiracy, one might see that the hypothetical thinking becomes, almost immediately, the clear-cut "judgment" and "condemnation" of the victim. The narrator in Acts 21:27 indicates that after observing Paul in the Temple, (not mentioning anybody else, i. e., Paul was alone) the Jews began to incite the people by using tactics to create confusion (συνέχεον). Purposely, I use the expression "creating confusion" because it is the semantic level that is properly implied in the verb συγχέω which also means to stir up, to confuse, to mix, or to cause dismay.<sup>18</sup> The proceedings of the accusers who try to confuse and stir up the Jewish population become the most negative actions that one can assume to see in a trial. Usually the accusations, if they are true, must be clear according to the truth and context of the deeds committed. The accusation and judgment here are permeated by a constant confusion that promotes violence towards the victim as it is demonstrated by the precise use of the verbal tense in active imperfect (συνέχεον).<sup>19</sup>

The steady confusion, fueled by the hate of the accusers, produces the physical violence against the victim. The condemnation is manifested physically as an immediate reaction. This means that the physical action is a direct result of a mental condemnation that already took place conjointly with the accusation. The expression of ἐπέβαλον ἐπ' αὐτὸν τὰς χεῖρας (Act 21:27) can be literally translated as "they threw (their) hands upon him," an expression that indicates the

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<sup>16</sup> The Jewish law prescribes that the false witness and the accused person must appear in front of judges and priests and a thorough process of investigating should take place in order to verify the truth of the accusations. See Deut 19:16-21 in Makkot 5b; Maimonides, *Mishne Torah, Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 12, 4, Sanhedrin 46b; Julius Stone, *Human Law and Human Justice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1965), 22-23, especially note 61.

<sup>17</sup> The verb νομίζω usually is translated in active voice as to suppose, to think, to presume or to assume. Cf. James Moulton and George Milligan, "νομίζω," in *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 428.

<sup>18</sup> The verb συγχέω implies the following semantic connotations: to pour together, to confuse, to create consternation, to confound, to trouble, to stir up. Cf. Moulton and Milligan, "σύγχυσις, συγχέω," 595; BAGD, "συγχέω," 775.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Blass-Debrunner, nn. 325.327.

immediate reaction that was accompanied by force, which makes sense if the people are emotionally aroused or shaken (ἐκινήθη Acts 21:30)<sup>20</sup> by the assumptions being made. The same emotional participation is demonstrated at the end of Paul's defense speech when the Jewish audience reacted in rage after the kerygmatic proclamation of Paul and his inclusion of the gentiles (*goyim*) in the divine plan of salvation of Yhwh. The rage seen here is based on the charges of "religion and race." The reactive cry of the furious crowd states: "take this from the earth because he is not fit to live (Αἶρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον· οὐ γὰρ καθήκειν αὐτὸν ζῆν. Acts 22:22).

A strong statement such as this does not give space for a change of mind. Here I would like to underline the condemnation that implies the "elimination of life." In other words, everyone who proclaims a different message or thinks in a different way, does not have a chance to be accepted by this community and as a consequence the person or victim, in this case Paul, needs to be eliminated. This mindset reduces the victim to some sort of disease that needs to be eradicated, just because the victim proclaims the inclusion of others who are not from the same race as the accusers, but are equally important in the plan of salvation of Yhwh. The use of the verb καθήκω in imperfect tense (καθήκειν in Acts 22:22) indicates that while the victim is still alive that person continues to be unworthy of living or existing in the eyes of the accusers, i.e., Paul ought not to live.<sup>21</sup> Such a scandalous attitude demonstrates the pattern of hate and discrimination that is associated with a culture of death.

The behavior of the Jewish crowd is described by the Lukan author through Greek verbs in imperfect tense. This verbal modality reveals a constant and permanent hostile attitude of the anonymous crowd towards the victim and analogically these attitudes reflect the constant attitude of racism and racial profiling that have been infiltrating the American culture since the time of the framers. This discriminatory mindset of racism and profiling by some has become a part of the social DNA of many in modern America, and its resulting "American anonymous crowd" preserves and reflects similar assumptions, judgments, and condemnations towards the "other" who is ethnically different. In direct opposition to this behavioral pattern, the Lukan message of Christianity embodied in Paul denotes that God's plan of salvation includes the unique multifaceted and dissimilar dimensions of each person, applying a divine design that does not require membership into a specific ethnicity.

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<sup>20</sup> The verb ἐκινήθη is in indicative aorist passive, presenting the 3rd person singular of the verb κινέω. The passive can be translated as to be moved, to excite, to create a riot or disturbance, to throw into commotion. Cf. BAGD, "κινέω," 432.

<sup>21</sup> The verb καθήκειν is the indicative imperfect active in the 3rd person singular of the verb καθήκω. Among the diverse meanings of this verb, the semantic connotation implied in Acts 22:22 is "to become, to be fit, to be proper or fitting." Cf. BAGD, "καθήκω," 389; Bock, *Acts*, 663. For the verbal modality see Blass-Debrunner, nn. 325,327.



### 1.3. Assumption, Judgment, and Condemnation by the Roman authority

Bruce qualifies the intervention of the Roman authority as a rescuing act in favor of Paul.<sup>22</sup> However, I respectfully disagree with his opinion on this qualification. While it is obvious that the soldiers who stayed at the Antonia fortress timely intervened in the midst of the violent riot, their intention was not to save Paul, the victim.<sup>23</sup> Their primary goal was to put an end to the violence that challenged their ability to keep control of the situation. The narrator explicitly indicates that the violent Jews stopped beating Paul in the moment they saw the Roman soldiers (Acts 21:32). The determined and fast intervention of a large contingent of soldiers<sup>24</sup> was a good deterrent for the Jews, reminding them who had the ultimate human power. Therefore, the stopping of the physical aggression towards Paul was motivated by their fear of the ruling power of the time. It is important to see that from all the violence executed, the one who is taken into custody and put in chains is precisely the victim. Why didn't the soldiers arrest members from the violent crowd who were stirring up the problems? The actions of the Roman representatives disclose that they assumed the culpability of the victim. Their "assumption" presupposes a judgment and condemnation even before any investigation was done while meeting their goal of returned calm and appeasing the Jewish crowd.

It is significant the emphatic expressions used to characterize Paul's incarceration in Acts 21:33. The author uses two verbs to indicate the "excessive use of power" to a person who is beaten by a crowd. The first action is performed by the tribune (ὁ χιλίαρχος) who took hold of Paul with hostile intention or manners, semantic levels implied in the verb ἐπελάβετο.<sup>25</sup> To this action was added the order to bind the prisoner with two chains (δεθῆναι ἀλύσεσι δυοσί). The most striking note of this behavior is that binding applied to the only person in the episode who was not aggressive, while the abusive and arbitrary use of power, common among the Roman soldiers, mirrored they did not care much about due process in cases that involved non-Roman citizens.

It is crucial to highlight the excessive use of power in both cases: the Jews and the Romans, making the latter distinctive in the sense that the Roman authority represents the maximum law in the territory, guaranteeing the assurance of peace and harmony, while the Jews claim Paul was the deterrent to their peace and harmony.

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 410-411.

<sup>23</sup> Important detail concerning the location and the characteristics of the Antonia Fortress are given by Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 5.238-245.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Bock, *Acts*, 652.

<sup>25</sup> The verb ἐπελάβετο is the indicative aorist of the middle voice in 3rd person singular of the verb ἐπιλαμβάνω or ἐπιλαμβάνομαι that can be translated as to take, to lay hold of, to take possession of, to overtake, to attain to, or to seize upon anything with hands. Cf. BAGD, "ἐπιλαμβάνομαι," 295.

The assumption of a crime that implied a judgment and condemnation became explicit when Paul spoke in Greek to the Roman soldier and he answered to Paul: “Are you not the Egyptian (ὁ Αἰγύπτιος) who started the recent revolt and led those four thousand cut-throats out into the desert?” (Acts 21:38 NJB). This jumping to conclusions is the essential attitude of profiling that implies judgment and condemnation of an innocent person. The Greek formulation of the question is crucial for this interpretation. The Roman soldier asks: οὐκ ἄρα σὺ εἶ ὁ Αἰγύπτιος ... (Acts 21:38), starting his question with the adverb οὐκ that expects a positive answer, especially if οὐκ is combined with the inferential particle ἄρα.<sup>26</sup> The arresting was being made on the “assumption” that Paul was the Egyptian rebel, who was an enemy of the Roman authority and who abandoned four thousand men in the desert while he ran away to save his own skin.<sup>27</sup> The violence of the crowd and probably the physical aspect of Paul, even though these indicators are not mentioned in the text, appear to be part of the criteria used by the Roman authority to arrest a person.

After granting the right of speech, Paul addressed the Jewish crowd in Aramaic, but his *apologia* ended in a violent reaction of the crowd, which consequently reinforced the squelching behavioral pattern of the Roman authority. The commander and the Roman soldiers could not understand Paul’s speech because of the language barrier, but by the reaction of the crowd, they continued to exercise their abusive power by sending Paul to the barracks with a brutal process of interrogation that implied physical flogging (Acts 22:24). The same pattern of abusive power is manifested in an increasing degree.

The commander had ordered μάστιξιν ἀνετάξασθαι αὐτὸν (Act 22:24) which is a thorough examination or interrogatory by using μάστιξ, namely, a whip, lash, or scourge which implies physical aggression and torture. The μάστιξιν or *flagrum* consisted of a wooden handle with leather strips to which are tied pieces of metal and bones.<sup>28</sup> This practice of beating was commonly applied to noncitizens or slaves and such brutality was quite normal among the Roman soldiers. They would not presume that a person portraying Paul’s characteristics, namely, being an Aramaic speaker with a physical appearance they easily confused with an Egyptian, i. e, a non-Roman or a “criminal,” could be in fact a Roman citizen from birth. This may have been avoided if the Roman tribune could understand Paul’s defense speech, but the language and cultural barriers help the reader to better understand the unnecessary conflicts born out of division, cultural ignorance that causes division and the non-acceptance of other cultures.

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Blass-Debrunner § 440.2; Bock, *Acts*, 657.

<sup>27</sup> Josephus describes the particulars of the rebellion led by the Egyptian mentioned in Acts 21:38. Cf. Flavius Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.13.5 § 261-263; Id. *Antiquitates* 20.8.6 §169-172. See also Bock, *Acts*, 657; Bruce, *Acts*, 412; Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 700.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. BAGD, “μάστιξ,” 495.

The moment of the anagnorisis<sup>29</sup> comes in Acts 22:25 when Paul reveals to the Tribune his Roman citizenship which legally exempted him from the brutality of the flagellation according to the Valerian and Porcian laws.<sup>30</sup> The Roman citizenship is the only argument in the narrative that guarantees a basic right to a fair trial and to the physical integrity of his person. The legal status of Paul becomes the only protection against the abuse of authority since the Roman representatives are equally subjected under the *lex romana*. The following verses and episodes are determined by the rights implied in Paul's Roman citizenship, especially his future trip to Rome, since any Roman citizen has the right to appeal to Caesar (*provocatio* in Acts 25:11).<sup>31</sup>

#### 1.4. Hermeneutical behavioral pattern

As a précis the behavioral pattern from the aforementioned social settings offers nine semantic communicative lines that surfaces after the brief semantic and narrative analysis of the pericope according to the behavioral patterns expressed in the Jewish and Roman social settings.

- a) Cause: it is rooted in the odium, hate, or anger of the accusers motivated by the diversity of race and religion, e.g., Paul's teachings to the gentiles (Acts 20:18-20; 21:27.29).
- b) Ethnicity and race: the rejection of another who belongs to a different ethnoracial background of the accusers (Acts 21:28; 22:21-22).
- c) Assumption (voμίζω): it is presupposition or conjecture that a person is guilty of a crime without the facts or validation of the true events (Acts 21:27-29.33-38; 22:22-25).
- d) Judgment and Condemnation: it is the jumping to conclusions when a person in power or authority mentally performs a judgment that simultaneously implies the condemnation of a person as a criminal without corroborating the factual truth, namely, without an investigation or a fair trial (Acts 21:27-29.33-38; 22:22-25).
- e) Violence: it is the physical aggression consequence of the inner judgment and condemnation that is rooted in hate or anger. The physical aggression, therefore, becomes the privileged instrument to eliminate the diversity since it becomes the threat to the *status quo* of the accusers or the one in power. The ultimate purpose of the violence in the Jewish setting is "death," while the purpose of the violence

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ska, *Our Fathers Have Told Us*, 27-28.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 421; Andrew Lintott, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 37-38; John Lentz, *Luke's Portrait of Paul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 120.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Bruce, *Acts*, 452-453; James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic Press, 1999), 169-170.

in the Roman setting is physical flagellation or torture to punish the behavior (Acts 21:28-32; 22:22-25).

f) Incarceration: it is the most obvious treatment exercised by those in power or in the position of authority as it basically removes the liberty of a person who is suspected or accused of a crime. In the Roman setting, incarceration was a part of the common exercise of power, resulting from a profiling mindset combined with the assumptions of a crime without a reasonable investigation into the facts (see Acts 21:33-39; 22:22-29).

d) Profiling: it is the usage of some cultural and phenotypic characteristics as the determining factor and indicator of an offense or criminal behavior (Acts 21:27.29.38).

e) Law and Citizenship become the only assurance and security manifested in the Roman setting that can preserve the basic rights and physical integrity of the accused person. The Jewish setting in the pericope wants the annihilation of the accused person on the basis of presuppositions. Hence the Roman law becomes the hermeneutical tool of justice for those who fall under it, independently of race and religion (Acts 22:25-29).

f) The victim, Paul, becomes the “stereotype” (τύπος) or representative figure of those who are abused and criminalized based on the assumptions, judgments, and condemnations associated with race and religion. The victim who suffers, according to the Lukan portrait,<sup>32</sup> becomes the cultural bridge and the hybrid existential paradigm between the different linguistic and religious barriers existing between the Roman and the Jewish settings.<sup>33</sup> The hate produced by the movements of ethnic-cultural integration and harmonization becomes the root of the behavioral pattern that criminalize Paul in the Jewish settings, while the assumption of crime and condemnation without factual examination comes from the profiling mindset of the soldiers –officers of the institutionalized power–through the context of the Roman setting.

The semantic notions of hate, anger, assumption, judgment, and condemnation take place in the inner personal realm of the accusers or agents. This means that these actions are psychological and spiritual dealings that belong to the subjective sphere of a person. I will use the expression *forum internum* to indicate this inner or private sphere of a person’s conscience in which takes place the aforementioned semantic notions.<sup>34</sup>

The notions of violence, incarceration, profiling, law, citizenship, and the resulting victim, indicate the “objective effects” of the inner susceptibilities of a

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<sup>32</sup> Pauline suffering becomes an instrument of Christian propagation. See Paul House, “Suffering and the Purpose of Acts,” *JETS* no. 33/ (1990): 319-326.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Sze-kar Wan, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality? ? An Asian-American Reading of Galatians,” 126-127.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Gerald O’Collins and Edward Farrugia, eds., “Forum Internum,” in *A Concise Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2013), 115-116. See also CIC 74, 130, 144, 1074, 1081-182.

person who is acting as an accuser or agent of authority, coming from a place of having a privileged position of power. These “objective effects” of the inner dispositions take place in an objective factual realm of human relationships and behaviors that may be called *forum externum*.<sup>35</sup>

These nine notions are semantic communicative lines that describe a general pattern that serves to construe the reality of the Black and Brown communities in the United States. However, it is essential to explain the applications of such semantic lines to the concrete reality of those who have had such experiences within the Black and Brown groups in the United States, in order to avoid the risk of interpreting the American reality by ways of subjective and arbitrary typological lines of interpretation.<sup>36</sup>

## **2. The biblical paradigm of racial profiling manifested in the official exercise of power at the street level to African-Americans and Hispanics**

If I want to validate the semantic biblical lines of assumption, judgment, condemnation, violence, incarceration, profiling, law, citizenship, and the resulting victim, it is essential to define the practice of “racial profiling” in the United States in order to see how these nine semantic notions are imbedded in the behavioral pattern of the American society.

The first methodological clarification is to establish the distinction between “profiling” and “racial profiling.” The term “profiling” refers to a common police practice of viewing and taking into consideration certain characteristics in order to determine a criminal behavior or a crime itself.<sup>37</sup> This definition is characterized by the initial generalization of profiling based on the particular characteristics of a specific crime and/or criminal behavior, and as such, it implies a reasonable common-sense application of this strategy to resolve a crime and stop a felonious conduct. For example, a killer of young women has been profiled as being a male, 6,2’ tall, blond with blue eyes. The police will begin its search for such a killer among a certain population that portrays the aforesaid characteristics. However, the police or the authorities never will assume that “every” person who matches to those characteristics is “guilty” of the crime for

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. James Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins to Liberating Conscience* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 20-21.

<sup>36</sup> I use the notion of typology as the most common methodological interpretation of Scripture when it is applied to a concrete reality. This means that the biblical text becomes the τύπος or “source domain” that finds a reflection or correlation in the reality (target domain). The purpose of my paper is to convey the scientific justification of this ancient practice by using the notions of Cognitive Semantics and practical Theology.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Harriet Barovick, “DWB: Driving While Black: Incidents in New Jersey and Maryland Heat up the Issue of racial Profiling by State Highway Patrols,” *Time* 5 June (1998): 35; James Cleary, *Racial Profiling Studies in Law Enforcement: Issues and Methodology*. Information Brief. Minnesota House of Representatives (St. Paul: MN: Research Department, 2000), 5.

the simple fact of being tall, blonde, and having blue eyes. According to this logic, it would be absurd for the authorities to behave in such manner.

If the police or the authorities of a country begin to “assume” (voμίζω) that every tall male, blond with blue eyes is a killer of young women, then the common sense of profiling applied to one unique particular crime is corrupted and distorted to the point that it becomes an “absolute paradigm” in which each person who portrays the aforementioned characteristics is instantly judged and condemned as guilty of such crime without factual evidence and due process, independently of the innocence and dignity of the person. It becomes then a “fallacy of composition” in which the characteristic of one single person is applied to every person who belongs to the same ethnoracial background.<sup>38</sup> Therefore the practice of profiling is distorted to the point that it is based uniquely on the characteristic of race or ethnicity, as the absolute criterion that embodies the feelings of “odium” for a criminal behavior that is arbitrarily applied to any person who belongs to a particular ethnicity, namely, Black and Brown persons. The motivation of hate can then fuel the assumptions that simultaneously imply the judgment, condemnation, violent punishment, incarceration, and even death of the victims whose only crime is to have the skin color that is used from the distorted absolute indicator and evidence for a crime. In other words, this is the essential definition of “racial profiling.”<sup>39</sup>

The racial profiling practiced in America is the vivid or pragmatic exercise of the semantic notions identified in Acts, in which the victim, Paul, becomes the stereotype embodied in the Black and Brown victims of today. The victimization is created and harbored not only by the local law enforcement agencies (e.g., police), political views or even the government (represented in the Roman and Jewish settings in Acts), but also by the general mindset of the people (Jewish setting in Acts) who judge and condemn, even though most of the time such inner condemnation does not materialize. In this line of thought the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) is right in stating that racial profiling is becoming a “generalized mindset” that stereotypes certain persons through the eyes of another culture’s preconceived ideas about those persons’ moral character.<sup>40</sup>

The most evident cases of such racial profiling are manifested on the streets, especially in traffic violations or stops. The Black and Brown communities have

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<sup>38</sup> “The fallacy of composition consists in treating a distributed characteristic as if it were collective. It occurs when one makes the mistake of attributing to a group (or a whole) some characteristic that is true only of its individual members (or its parts), and then makes inferences based on that mistake.” W. H. Halverson, *Concise Logic* (New York: Random House, 1984), 73.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Cleary, *Racial Profiling*, 5; Randall Kennedy, “Suspect Policy,” *The New Republic* 13 September (1999): 30; Cleary, *Racial Profiling*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ontario Human Rights Commission, *What is racial profiling?* Online source consulted on 2/11/2020: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/paying-price-human-cost-racial-profiling/what-racial-profiling>

long claimed that the police commonly use traffic infringement as a pretext to stop and investigate a criminal behavior. The profile of the Roman soldiers is clearly manifested in patterns that among African Americans are called “Driving while Black” (DWB).<sup>41</sup>

The paradigm of assumption of criminality implies a judgment, condemnation and punishment that all have materialized in the moment of the traffic stop. The application of the law against which a criminal behavior is applied, is based only on the race-color of the person under interrogation. In other words, the simple fact of being Black or Brown is already a crime in and of itself. The statement is logically absurd since it defies the common application of due process implied in the law in order to prevent evil or criminality.

The extension of the abuse of authority permeates other social settings that can go beyond the traffic stops. The police detentions are more likely to happen in the Black and Brown neighborhoods than other “White” areas that show equal criminal records. Individually, Black and Brown young persons are statistically more likely to face multiple police encounters and detentions than otherwise identically identified criminal profiles of White individuals. The result of these police encounters can imply searches and even aggressive treatment that are reminiscence of the behavioral pattern of the Roman soldiers with Paul. The report entitled “Black, Brown, and Targeted,” published in October of 2014, is an excellent analysis of the aforementioned situation.<sup>42</sup> The report is the product of the studies of ACLU using the Boston Police Department files that recorded more than 200,000 police encounters with civilians between the years 2007 and 2010. The factual evidence of the files and the report demonstrates what the communities of color have been proclaiming for decades, that the Boston police have been targeting “Black” and “Brown” persons even when the victimized persons are innocent.<sup>43</sup>

In other words, the authority is consciously acting against the paradigm of the law which should correspond to the natural principle of human dignity and protection of the integrity of life. This is a crucial point that can be equally applied to the cases of abusive power towards Black and Browns, yet there is an important distinction between these paradigms as presented in Acts 22:25-29. In

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<sup>41</sup> David Harris, “Driving while Black and all other Traffic Offenses: The Supreme Court and Pretextual Traffic Stops,” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* vol. 87, no. 2 (1997): only source consulted 2/11/2020: [http://law-journals-books.vlex.com/vid/driving-traffic-offenses-stops-53721338?\\_ga=1.123094664.2080033379.1486833957](http://law-journals-books.vlex.com/vid/driving-traffic-offenses-stops-53721338?_ga=1.123094664.2080033379.1486833957). See also Jim Cleary, *Racial Profiling*, 7.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. ACLU, *Black, Brown and Targeted*. A Report on Boston Police Department Street Encounters from 2007–2010 (Boston, Mass: ACLU Foundation of Massachusetts, 2014), 1-2; Carol Rose, “Black, Brown And Targeted: Racial Profiling In Boston,” in *WBUR Cognoscenti*, published 10/10/2014. Online source consulted 2/11/2017: <http://www.wbur.org/cognoscenti/2014/10/10/boston-racial-profiling-aclu-finds-bias-stop-and-frisk-carol-rose>

<sup>43</sup> Cf. ACLU, *Black, Brown and Targeted*, 1.

the Roman setting, even though with the common practice of abusive power manifested in their use of *flagellatio* or *verberatio*, incarceration by chains, tortures, and insults, there is a profound respect for the *lex romana*. The Roman commander fears<sup>44</sup> the committed actions against the victim in the moment that Paul revealed that he also is a Roman citizen. In this manner the Lukan account shows in the first narrative level the power of the “law” that implies the respect of the civil rights of everyone who is covered by the *civis romanus*.<sup>45</sup> This implied that the victim had the same human and civil rights of those who were in power, i.e., the Roman commander.

Ironically the American society that proclaims to be part of the civilized world of the 21st century presents a behavioral pattern contrary to the legal principle of the “rule of law” very well respected by the Romans. Therefore, the abusive exercise of power, based on the concurrent mindset of racial profiling, continues to manifest its absurdity and the evil implied in the victimization of the Black and Brown communities today.

The same generalized mindset can be found not only in the typical cases of civilian encounters with the police and ensuing traffic stops, but also among common people against Black and Brown persons in shopping centers or stores. It is the “consumer racial profiling” that demonstrates this same generalized mindset that is becoming a common practice permeating almost every dimension of the American life. The “consumer racial profiling” is the assumption of corrupt characteristics projected onto the main trait of race, and used as the absolute evidence to make an inner judgment of condemnation. The difference of these kinds of cases is that instead of incarceration or death, the damage is the psychological and spiritual marks produced by this type racial profiling that become a permanent stigma within the lives of its victims who can lose faith in any overall goodness and acceptance of others.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, racial profiling produces profound psychological and spiritual violence among any targeted Black and Brown communities.<sup>47</sup>

The pinnacle of the racial profiling is manifested when this sort of practice culminates in the death of the victim. Such cases embody the Jewish setting manifested in Acts 22:22 which is the odium of the accusers wanting the death of

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<sup>44</sup> χιλιάρχος δὲ ἐφοβήθη ἐπιγνοὺς ὅτι Ῥωμαῖός ἐστιν Acts 22:29. See Fitzmyer, *Acts*, 712.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Cicero, *In Verrem* II.5.170. I.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Jennifer Lee, *Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2002), 168-180; Catherine Dunn, “Shopping While Black: America’s Retailers Know They Have A Racial Profiling Problem. Now What?” in *International Business Times*, published 12/15/15. Online source consulted on 2/11/2017: <http://www.ibtimes.com/shopping-while-black-americas-retailers-know-they-have-racial-profiling-problem-now-2222778>.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Hugh Butts, “The black mask of humanity: Racial/ethnic discrimination and post-traumatic stress disorder,” *Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law*, no. 30 (2002): 336-339



the victim. During the year 2015, records indicate the police killed approximately 102 unarmed Black persons in the United States. However, this number could be higher if one distrusts the official reports that classified the deceased victims, who were assumed to be armed but were not, as it was in the cases of Matthew Ajibade, Tamir Rice, Ahmaud Arbery, and Alex Nieto which will be further analyzed here below.

The statistics showed by the Mapping Police Violence Reports indicate that nearly one in three Black persons killed by police in 2015 were identified as unarmed. This means that 37% of unarmed persons killed by police were Black persons. This statistical information reinforces a more intense meaning when the readers recall that 13.3% of the American population is African American.<sup>48</sup> This profiling behavioral pattern remains a constant trait manifested in the statistical reports of police violence. For example, in June of 2015, 32% of the victims killed by the police were unarmed Black persons, suggesting a total of 19 African Americans. In February of 2016, 41% of the victims killed by the police were unarmed Black persons; this means that 22 African Americans were killed in one month, namely, one Black person every 32 hours.<sup>49</sup>

The statistical information has very concrete faces and names that embody the 'real' characteristics of the victim set against the profiling characteristics utilized by law enforcement. Among the countless examples, I would like to mention four which are astonishing for the grievous evil produced by the racial profiling in the American milieu.

The first is the case of Matthew Ajibade, a former Savannah College of Art and Design student, who died when he was 21 years old. While he was having a manic bipolar disorder episode, his girlfriend called 911 and the police report said that he was combative against the authority. A video later released showed that the police officer shocked Ajibade "four times" with a taser, while Ajibade's hands and feet were shackled which manifests a strong similarity to Paul's episode of incarceration (see Acts 21:33). The officers put him in a restraining chair where he eventually died on 1/1/2015. A local coroner ruled the student's death as a homicide by blunt force trauma.

The second case is more shocking because of the victim's age: 12 years old. Tamir Rice was playing with a BB gun in a park, while "an anonymous caller" reported to police that a young Black young male was pointing a gun to random people on the street. The anonymity of the denouncer who assumed the crime of the victim echoes the anonymity of the Jewish crowd in the social setting of Acts.

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Mapping Police Violence: online source consulted on 2/11/2017: <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/unarmed/> See also US Census Bureau, Quick Facts, in <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/00>

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Mapping Police Violence: online source consulted on 2/11/2017: <https://mappingpoliceviolence.org/reports/>

The caller, according to the recording of the 911 calls, stated twice that the gun was “probably fake.” The police officer arrived and shot Tamir within 10 feet of distance. Afterwards, the same officer arrested Tamir’s sister who ran to his aid. Tamir did not receive first aid until four minutes later from a different deputy who was nearby.

The third case is a prototype event of the absolute racial profiling that leads to the annihilation of the human life of our African American communities. Ahmaud Arbery was a promising young man of 25 years old, whose only crime was to be an African American who loves to do outdoors exercise, especially jogging. Two white persons identified as Gregory McMichael, 64 years old, and his son Travis McMichael, 34 years old, assumed that an African American who is jogging through the quiet neighborhood of Satilla Shores, in Brunswick, a coastal city about midway between Savannah and Jacksonville (Georgia), was a criminal. Their racial profiling was enough for these two aforementioned individuals to decide to take action and “kill” Ahmaud Arbery on February 23<sup>rd</sup> of 2020, violating any common sense and civil respect for the human life that is supposed to be uphold in our country. The two criminals were not arrested *ipso facto*, since it took a while to issue an order of arrest for them by the authorities, after analyzing the videos of the neighbors that showed the heinous crime against an innocent person.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the case of Alejandro “Alex” Nieto offers a prototype victim of racial profiling in an environment of gentrification.<sup>51</sup> Alex Nieto was assassinated in the neighborhood where he had spent his whole life, an area that used to be predominantly Hispanic. Alex was never arrested, did not have a police record, was not involved in any criminal behavior, and was an active peaceful member of the community.<sup>52</sup> One of the key points of the Nieto’s death resides in the point that one day a group of White men saw Alex wearing a jacket with the colors of the San Francisco’s football team (red and gold) and a taser. Nieto was a security guard in a night club and he had been licensed to use the taser since 2007. However, his basic characteristics were enough for these men to call 911 announcing that a gang member<sup>53</sup> or a menacing intruder of “their neighborhood” was about to create problems.

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. Glynn County Police Department, *Public Release Incident Report for G20- 11303*. Digital public document: <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/6915-arbery-shooting/b52fa09cdc974b970b79/optimized/full.pdf#page=1>

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Chris Hamnett, “Gentrification and residential location theory: a review and assessment,” *Geography and the Urban Environment: Progress in Research and Application*, edited by D. Herbert and R. J. Johnston (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984), 6:284.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. “Who was Alex Nieto. Online source consulted on 2/12/2017: <https://justice4alexnieto.org/alex-story/>

<sup>53</sup> In San Francisco there are two predominant Latino gangs wearing distinctive colors: the Norteños wear red and the Sureños wear blue.

This racial profiling, as part of a generalized mindset, manifested in any such anonymous callers, represents the same kind of racial profiling done by the anonymous Jewish crowd of Acts' social setting. The behavioral pattern of the "anonymous crowd" reveals assumptions, judgments, and condemnations of an innocent person who is presented as an aggressor and criminal. In their *forum internum*, the callers have been moved by the fear and implicit hate of what is different, "the other," assuming that Alex, the victim, is a criminal on the basis of "his looks." The assumption of the criminal behavior implies the judgment and condemnation that provokes the actions of calling 911 and denouncing a danger, which is only manifested in the *forum externum* of the accusers.

The racial profiling reaches its summit in the "assumptions and actions" of the police officers as well who arrived a few minutes after the call. Four officers killed Alex Nieto by shooting more than 51 bullets at him, claiming that Nieto pointed "the taser" at them and they mistook its red laser light for the laser sights of a gun. Alex Nieto died on the evening of 21 March 2014 and 14 bullets were found inside his body. He was 28 years old. The brutality of this event makes it very difficult to believe the stories of the officers which is based on self-defense.

I use the stories of Matthew Ajibade, Tamir Rice, Ahmaud Arbery, and Alex Nieto as bold examples of the evil produced by such racial profiling and its ultimate consequences: the death of an innocent person.

In the biblical episode of Acts, Paul, the victim, is not killed or submitted to further mistreatment due to the respect given to his Roman citizenship, but in our "modern times" the notions of "law" and "respect for the human life" of a fellow citizen have become a "relative or secondary circumstance" subjugated by the distorted and absolute "racial profiling" frame of mind created by cultural ignorance using the warped lens of previous experiences. We cannot continue to behave according to the Jewish setting of Acts 22:22: αἴρε ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς τὸν τοιοῦτον, οὐ γὰρ καθῆκεν αὐτὸν ζῆν, namely, we are obliged to re-cultivate the basic Christian values of human dignity and protection of life expressed in the natural and civil law. We are absolutely called to stop the annihilation of someone's life just because that person is considered to be "bad" on the basis of ethnoracial indicators.

### **3. Racial profiling and the Lukan notion of Christianity: a proposal of healing to our American communities**

Following the previous line of thought, it is possible to conclude that the racial profiling with all its implications and pragmatic manifestations of evil is essentially against the Christian message of the Gospel and the behavioral pattern of Paul manifested in the Lukan narrative of the Acts of the Apostle. In other words, racial profiling is anti-Christian. In the same way as racial profiling goes against the values of the revealed law, it also goes against the basic human

principles and values manifested in the core promises and statements expressed in the United States' Constitution and Declaration of Independence.

In the biblical episodes of Acts, Paul becomes the prototype of the Christian heroic life who needs to strive and proclaim the Christian message to a hostile social setting that ultimately wants to annihilate him. Paul, in the studied pericope, embodies the role of the victim who is subjugated by hostile treatments motivated by odium on the basis of ethnicity and religion. According to the Lukan paradigm it is possible to propose three basic notions implied in the Christian behavior of Paul that can be helpful as a counter mindset to eliminate the culture of death and abuse brought on by the racial profiling: multiculturalism, integration, and forgiveness.

a) *Multiculturalism* indicates the existence of multiple ethnicities with their respective multi religious forms and practices that coexist in one jurisdiction or country. The role of Paul especially summarizes the multicultural affluence of Jewish, Greek, Roman, and Christian cultures. Being immersed in the multicultural and ethnic world he became a good catalyzer or a bridge between cultural and linguistic barriers in order to spread the Christian message that does not deny the richness of any diversity; quite the contrary. Through a multifaceted social setting, Paul was able to create communities of faith acknowledging the diversity of charismas as true manifestations of the unique divine source in the Trinitarian God.<sup>54</sup> Paradoxically a similar social setting is manifested in the American society and the Church. They are the result of many different members that become one single social body of persons who reflect the *imago Dei* through the richness of the diversity and multicultural uniqueness.<sup>55</sup>

b) *Integration*: the notion of multiculturalism implies the idea of coexistence and tolerance, but this is not enough if we want to present a Christian proposal. The Lukan paradigm manifested in Paul indicates that the multifaceted Christian communities possess a bond that goes beyond tolerance. It implies the acceptance that leads to the integration of the "other" who is different without losing the richness of one's uniqueness. It is important to clarify that when I use the term "integration," I am not indicating "conformity" to a hegemonic system in which the otherness is lost.<sup>56</sup> Paul represents the basic combination of integration of ethnoracial dimensions without eliminating the richness of each one (see Gal

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. 1Cor 12:1-12.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. 1Cor 12:12-26.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Fernando Segovia, "Melting and Dreaming in America: Visions and Re-visions," in *A Dream Unfinished: Theological reflections on America from the Margins*. Edited by Eleazar Fernández and Fernando F. Segovia (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 231-245; Buell and Hodge, "The Politics of Interpretation," 237-238.

3:28).<sup>57</sup> The ethnoracial and cultural integration should be read as an egalitarian relationship of cultures, in which none has more power over the other. Keeping in mind the somatic metaphor of 1Cor 12:12-31, the ideal integration is not an asymmetric relationship in which subordinationism of many predominates. In the complex reality of the uniqueness of each person and culture, the single parts are equally essential for the well-functioning of the body, namely, the Church or Faith Centers (i.e., not controlled by Civil Authorities) and the American Society within their respective multicolor spectrum of individuals.

The richness of the Black and Brown communities has been for a long time marginalized and underestimated through history. These ethnicities with all their respective dimensions may have been treated as an appendix of the American culture and seemingly just tolerated. In reality the Black and Brown ethnicities have integrally and essentially been shaping and transforming the history of the United States since its foundation. Their ethnical integration is a matter of justice to all and portrays a fundamental truth that is a part of the rich diversity and heritage of this country that goes beyond just the British and White European influences. Paul in his own speech (Acts 21:39-40) does not deny his Jewish heritage. However, it is essential to understand that Paul also does not deny his Roman citizenship, because it is an essential dimension of his personhood right from birth (Acts 22:25-29). It is crucial to understand this challenging dimension of integration that helps us to see each other not as a threat but as members of a social family where all its members have equal human and civil rights.<sup>58</sup>

c) *Forgiveness*: the aforementioned cycle of evil permeating racist practices needs to end with a sincere shared mindset of pardon. Forgiveness becomes the most powerful tool to destroy the hate that remains at the root of racism. The path of reconciliation is always the hardest praxis that requires a dialogical dimension that involves the accuser(s) or perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). Forgiveness is one of the ultimate Christian prescriptions exemplified in the absolute manner in the person of Christ (see Lk 23:34). Paul, in the studied pericope, never condemns his accusers or seeks revenge against them. His silence expresses the will of not participating in a cycle of violence and evil where he is the victim. The perversity of the cycle of evil is that the suffering inflicted in the victim may transform the victim into a potential instrumental cause of evil for somebody else, because the inflicted suffering finds its outcome in hate. Following this line of thought, John Paul II rightly affirms:

“... hope that political leaders and peoples, especially those involved in tragic conflicts, fueled by hatred and the memory of often ancient wounds,

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Hayes, “To Be the Bridge: Voices from the Margins,” 57. 60-64; Wan, “Does Diaspora Identity Imply Some Sort of Universality?,” 126-127; Buell and Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation,” 248-249.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Buell and Hodge, “The Politics of Interpretation,” 235-236.238-239.

will be guided by the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation exemplified by the Church and will make every effort to resolve their differences through open and honest dialogue.”<sup>59</sup>

The notions of multiculturalism and integration find a point of fusion in the ultimate act of reconciliation through forgiveness. Any process of peace that destroys the cycle of evil needs to start with the acceptance and forgiveness of the mistakes in the *forum conscientiae* rooted in the most inner angle of the person.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, any harm and emotional suffering produced by racial profiling or any racist praxis must be stopped from the root. This requires a radical transformation of the generalized mindset of racism that has endured by actions of profiling people for centuries within the United States. We cannot continue to be “prisoners of the past” but assume a more accurate re-reading of each other’s history accepting and acknowledging the richness of each other and then “we” as a nation can avoid mutually hasty and racial judgments in order to acquire a better acceptance and integration of others.<sup>61</sup>

From the point of view of practical theology, it is essential to identify the role of the Church, as a community of faith, in the midst of the practices of the American society. This role implies also a process of purification of the Church herself; this means, the Church who should denounce the injustices of racial discrimination needs to liberate herself from attitudes and behaviors that manifest a racial profiling at all levels of the hierarchy and pastoral life. In this way the Church can exercise more effectively her prophetic role of mediation in order to “destroy” the cycle of evil embodied in the racial discriminatory attitude and behavior. In order to achieve the task of ending racial profiling or behavior, the Church must insist in the spiritual disposition of pardon, proper of the *forum internum* and human conscience that leads to a transformational reconciliation which concurrently requires a process of healing from a personal to a social level.<sup>62</sup> Alongside this spiritual process, the good will of the leaders of the American society must be an essential component together with the educational system<sup>63</sup> along with the role of the media to herald in the defense and value of the human dignity in all its manifestations (*forum externum*).<sup>64</sup>

In order to conclude this elucidation which only reflects a single aspect of the complex American reality, I would like to present the words of John Paul II, on the occasion of his visit to South Africa in 1995, because they are pertinent to the

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<sup>59</sup> John Paul II, “Address to the participants in the International Symposium on the Inquisition” (31 October 1998), 5, in *L’Osservatore Romano English edition*, 11 November (1998), 3.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Message for World Day of Peace 1997*, n. 1.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Contribution to World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, nn. 8-9.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, nn. 10-12.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, nn.13-15,17

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, n. 16

present reflection. He stated: “solidarity is the only path forward, out of the complete moral bankruptcy of racial prejudice and ethnic animosity...”<sup>65</sup> According to this theological path, our reflections could be humble contributions for this needed process of solidarity and acceptance.

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<sup>65</sup> John Paul II, *Homily at Germiston Racecourse*, Johannesburg [17 September 1995], n. 4, in *Insegnamenti* XVIII, 2 (1995), 581; Pontifical Commission for Justice and Peace, *Conference against Racism*, n. 22.

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