



“Is the American Democratic Party Two-Faced?— An Epistle to the Church”

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† TO MY DEAR AND BELOVED FELLOW AMERICAN CLERGY, FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN BAR, DR. CLAYTON COWART OF THE CHURCH OF GOD THE BIBLEWAY, AND TO THE EDITOR OF THE FLORIDA SENTINEL BULLETIN:

Greetings to you, my brothers and my sisters!

As you know, I am neither a Democrat nor a Republican, but rather I am a political Independent who writes to you this day as your Christian brother and a fellow minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I am sending you this post script to my first epistle, "Babylonian Captivity of the African American Vote 2020," because I felt the need further to say a word or two as the plight of the African American family unit in light of the prevailing values that are espoused in secular American politics as whole and by the prevailing secular jurisprudence that is in our legal system. Under the present political system, and in the current direction in which the United States appears to be headed, I do not believe that the plight of the African American family unite can be ameliorated, *without thorough intervention from orthodox African American clergy at every level of the secular government*. I see no answers to this problem from within the American Democratic Party; and, I fear, if this grave matter regarding the black family is left alone, that there will be grave consequences for the African American community in the days, years, and decades ahead.

A. Does the American Democratic Party Show Two faces to the Black Community?

Like Janus who was a pagan god of ancient Rome, is the American Democratic Party two-faced?

I have heard, through grumbings from within the African American community, that the American Democratic Party only shows up only every four years during an election cycle, begging for the black vote, but then disappears afterwards, providing nothing to the African American community in return for their votes. The truth of the matter is: the American Democratic Party has its hands tied to a motley constituency whose economic interests are opposed to the plight of the two-parent African American family structure in the United States. And sadly, to be sure, the working-class African American father and husband is still largely *persona non-grata* from within that liberal political coalition.

Since the early 1990s, the Democratic Party's rendezvous with the "black male" is that he alone is expendable, but that everyone else within its large tent—immigrants, senior citizens, white women, non-college educated, blue-collar whites, suburban and college-educated whites, corporate elites, and black women—are important constituencies. Some may surmise that the purpose of the Democratic-sponsored 1994 Crime Bill was precisely to appease its non-black liberal constituencies, as the expense of vulnerable African American men. If this charge against the Democratic Party is true, then it is a grievous fact which the Black Church in the United States—that mighty bulwark against slavery and oppression—must stand firm as an advocate for the oppressed and as a beacon of light, truth, and hope. At the same time, the Black Church in the United States must also face a sobering fact about the era in which we now find ourselves: post-Christian, post modernism.

The Roman god Janus was a god of new beginnings, and I fear that the swearing in of the Democratic ticket to the White House in 2021 will be a *pagan new beginning* in the United States and one that will—if the Black Church is not vigilant-- hasten of the destruction of the African American family in the United States. Let us face this sobering fact: the American Democratic Party is a secular institution, not bound by the governing constitution of the Christian Church, The Holy Bible or the Word of God. The Black Church thus has the plain duty to remind the African American community to take a step back, and to look at the American Democratic Party for what it really and truly is: an urban-based, national political party in the United States. Because of the Democratic Party's core

constituencies, it has in the past—whether unwittingly or not—evaded the plight of the traditional African American family and the unique problems facing African American boys, men, fathers, and husbands. And, today, I see no indication that the American Democratic Party has the leadership, the will, or the desire to change its evasive non-action toward the plight of the African American family in the United States. It cannot, without the guidance, aid, and wisdom of the Black Church.

B. White Liberal Northerners and the Democratic Party cannot be trusted with African American Gender and Family Relations—They Will Rip the Black Family apart!

In 2009, I met Columbia University historian Eric Foner at the University of Chicago, and there Professor Foner opened my eyes, for the first time, to the North’s racism against the black slaves during the antebellum period. How could this be? After all, did not Abraham Lincoln and the North free the slaves during the American Civil War (1861- 1865)? Not so, Professor Foner rejoined: the North hated slavery, but it did not love the slaves! The reason: white workers did not want economic competition with the African American freedmen! Why had I not been taught this truth when I was in grade school or college? Why had the Black Church never preached this truth from its pulpit?

Today very little has changed, and I fear that the white northern liberals—who make the constituencies of the Democratic Party in several important northern states like Michigan, New York, Wisconsin, and Illinois—are staunchly opposed to the plight of African American workers and families, and that they—not the Congressional Black Caucus, President-elect Joe Biden or Vice-President-elect Kamala Harris—are the real forces behind the American Democratic Party.

In the American North—in states like Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, New York, and Illinois—with its labor unions and Democratic liberalism, non-black voters have been especially inimical toward the plight of the African American family because of its perennial suppression of working-class African American men. The catastrophically-high black-male unemployment rates in major northern cities like Chicago, Illinois and New York, York have been notorious. Indeed, in 2018, the fifteen cities rated the “WORST for BLACK AMERICANS” were not in the American South (where there was slavery and rebellion) but rather in the American North:²

² <https://urbanmilwaukee.com/2018/11/27/city-ranked-as-2nd-worst-place-for-blacks/?fbclid=IwAR16Gkyr-o9Q7JSocKMJHz6QQTMN319DSfxRrOQYsDWZfhyrWvo10v-uw>

Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Iowa
Milwaukee-Waukesha-West Allis, Wisconsin
Racine, Wisconsin
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, Minnesota
Peoria, Illinois
Elmira, New York
Decatur, Illinois
Niles-Benton Harbor, Michigan
Kankakee, Illinois
Fresno, California
Springfield, Illinois
Trenton, New Jersey
Danville, Illinois
Rochester, New York
Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, Illinois

And a 2019 poll listed the following top-fifteenth cities as the worst for African Americans, as follows:

Milwaukee-Waukesha- West Allis, Wisconsin
Racine, Wisconsin
Waterloo-Cedar, Iowa
Minneapolis-St. Paul- Bloomington, Minn/ Wis.
Danville, Illinois
Niles-Benton Harbor, Michigan
Peoria, Illinois
Rockford, Illinois
Springfield, Illinois

Rochester, New York

Syracuse, New York

Kandakee, Illinois

Jackson (Detroit), Michigan

Atlantic City- Hammonton, New Jersey

Erie, Pennsylvania

To my dear African American clergy, let me be very clear: white prejudice and racism in the American North has nothing to do with slavery and Civil War! It has everything to do with economics! White workers want nothing to do with anything that will improve the plight of African American workers, families, men, etc., because they fear their economic competition. This needs to change, and only the Christian Church, led by the Black Church, can today mediate between these contentious, secular forces from within the American Democratic Party! Hence, I believe, and strongly contend, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has to be preached in an unconventional manner and in unconventional secular spaces, if in these difficult days of the American Republic right and justice are to prevail.

C. African American Clergy Must Insist Upon Melioration of the Black Family

For this reason, the African American clergy must remain vigilant in holding American liberalism and the Democratic Party accountable to the plight of the traditional, two-parent heterosexual African American family unit, as the Democrats sweep to power in the White House in 2021.

Can the nation survive without a reformed and vigilant African American Church advocating on behalf of the African American poor? I do not think so. The reason is that the American secular social system-- educational, economic, legal, and political—does not support bringing African American men and women together in order to form stable and monogamous Christian marriages, which is the essential foundation of civilization. This rule of thumb is the universal natural law of nations. What is true of black families is also true of Hispanic families, Asian families, and white families. It does not seem to me, that if the black family in the

United States is broken, the rest of America will be eventually poised by the venomous snake of social dislocation, poverty, and sexual immorality which festers and grows under these conditions. The nation can be no stronger than its weakest link. And without a strong, stable African American family, the *race problem in the United States cannot be resolved*.

As Senator Robert F. Kennedy said on August 15, 1966:

"We know the importance of strong families to development; we know that financial security is important for family stability and that there is strength in the father's earning power. But in dealing with Negro families, we have too often penalized them for staying together. As Richard Cloward has said: 'Men for whom there are no jobs will nevertheless mate like other men, but they are not so likely to marry. Our society has preferred to deal with the resulting female-headed families not by putting the men to work but by placing the unwed mothers and children on public welfare—substituting check-writing machines for male wage-earners. By this means we have robbed men of manhood, women of husbands, and children of fathers. To create a stable monogamous family, we need to provide men (especially Negro men) with the opportunity to be men, and that involves enabling them to perform occupationally.'" Statement before U.S. Congressional Sub-Committee Hearing, August 15, 1966.

Strangely but assuredly, one thing is certain: *family destabilization*, and especially the absence of black fathers in the home, is the greatest social evil which today plagues the African American community.

But the problem that African Americans face is also an internal moral crisis that cannot be resolved without African Americans who thoroughly know and understand its internal pathologies, including but not limited to the following:

- (1). Black fathers failing or refusing to be good fathers toward their children;
- (2). Black mothers manipulating social welfare systems in order to deprecate the role of Black fathers in the lives of their children;
- (3). State welfare systems creating unnecessary emotional trauma between

Black fathers/ husbands and Black mothers/wives.

Given the current weaknesses of the African American family structure, and given the fierce economic competition between white and black workers in the United States, the leadership and stewardship of Black Church over the plight of the African American family is absolutely necessary as we move forward into the twenty-first century. Again, here, I ask: Can the American Democratic Party be trusted with promoting and protecting the interests of the African American family unit? Experience teaches us that it cannot.

D. Traditional African American Church and Family Values are at Odds with the general philosophy of the American Democratic Party

Lest we forget, the American Democratic Party is a secular organization in the United States that does not answer to the Christian Church and is not beholden to the Christian way of life, the *Holy Bible*, or the Word of God. To the extent the Democratic Party and the Black Church can agree on some issues, they should cooperate and work together. But to the extent that the American Democratic Party espouse social norms and values which undermine the biblical ideal of family and marriage, the Black Church cannot cooperate or work alongside that party, and must not be swallowed up by that party, through pressure for votes and funding. But I would not be speaking to you with candor, if I did not say that I do not believe that the American Democratic Party—because of its Northern anti-black constituencies—can promote the same ideas and ideals of family life which are biblical and which the Black Church has historically espoused: *the orthodox view of the father as head of the household!* Indeed, civil rights for African American men comes down to this critical ideal, and the American Democratic Party will rise or fall—and indeed America along with it—if it cannot restore the black man to his rightful position within the American home. But please allow me to take a moment in order to explain why traditional African-American Christian theology is today at odds with the fundamental trajectory of the American Democratic Party.

African American tradition is both African and Christian, and this explains why in Africa, Christianity is essentially orthodox and conservative Christianity—not liberal. The same is true in the Black Church in the United States. And the orthodox view of the all-male priesthood is closely aligned with the status of fatherhood, manhood, and husband-hood.³ It is therefore incumbent upon African

³ See, e.g., Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory Or, a Sum of Practical Theology, And Cases of Conscience* (Part 2 Christian Economics)(reprinted in Columbia, S.C. on January 18, 2019), p 27 (“So that body of that commonwealth did all jointly enter into covenant with God, and God to them, Deut. xxix.; xxx.; and xxvi. 17-19, ‘Thou hast

American clergy, as vice-regents of the Christ and as ministers of the Gospel, to espouse and promote the Christian standards of marriage within the African American community.

According to Christian tradition, the institution of marriage was the first institution ordained by God. Indeed, marriage is the nucleus of the social order; from it comes the wellsprings of family, freedom, culture, and civilization. For this reason, the Book of Genesis places the institution of marriage at the center of mankind's social and political structure.

The two most central scriptural texts influencing Jesus from his Hebrew heritage are Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24. The first reads: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.' The second reads: 'Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.'⁴

And English philosopher John Locke also placed the institution of marriage at the center of the Christian social democracy. Locke considered marriage to be the most basic, and perhaps, the most important, element (i.e., "society") within a nation-state. Likewise, many other western theologians and philosophers, including Plato, Aristotle, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas have concluded that the husband-wife-child family unit is the most fundamental and basic element of a healthy community. Although in Plato's ideal state, the family structure would be modified in order to ensure the nepotism did not perpetuate oligarchy.

Within the Christian world, the Apostles Peter and Paul summarized the duties and responsibilities of husbands and wives with the Christian marriage. The Apostle Peter, whom the Roman Catholic Church believes was entrusted with the keys to Christ's kingdom, gave the following instructions to married Christian couples:

vouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways; and the Lord hath vouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, that thou mayst be an holy people to the Lord.' So chap. Xxviii. 9; Dan. viii. 24; xii, 7. **Joshua, chap. xxiv. devoteth himself and his house to Lord; 'I and my house will serve the Lord.'** And **Abraham by circumcision (the covenant, or seal of the covenant of God)** consecrated his whole household to God; and so were all families after him to do (as **the males, in whom the whole was consecrated**). And whether besides the typifying intent, **there were not somewhat more in the sanctifying of all the first-born to God, who if they lived, were to be the heads of the families, may be questioned**).

⁴ John Witte, Jr., and Frank S. Alexander, *Christianity and Law: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Press, 2008),. p. 169-170.

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; 2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. 3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; 4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. 5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

And the Apostle Paul wrote something very similar to St. Peter, stating in the *Book of Ephesians*, the following:

²⁰ Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. ²² Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. ²⁴ Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. ²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. ²⁸ So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. ²⁹ For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and

cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: ³⁰ For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. ³¹ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. ³² This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. ³³ Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.

The importance of the writings of the Apostles Peter and Paul to the institution of Christian marriage are profound. Saints Peter and Paul were both personally commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the Gospel, so that their letters regarding sex and marriage have been viewed to be unequivocal, binding ecclesiastical law.

In addition to the *Holy Bible*, we should also note that in ancient Hebrew tradition, the word “family” literally meant “the father’s house.” In the Christian world, the Messiah is described as the bridegroom, and the church as the bride. Therefore, the orthodox view of the all-male priesthood as an iconic symbol of Jesus Christ the High Priest, is to strictly limit the priesthood to men. This restriction of the priestly office to men has deep and profound meaning for the African American community and other communities of color. Not only does this priestly restriction reinforce the idea of manhood, heterosexuality, and traditional, opposite-sex marriage, but it reinforces the status of fathers as the head of the home, church, and nation-state.⁵

And as “fathers” — whether as priests inside of the church, or as husbands inside of the home— the fundamental purpose of *priestly manhood* is to obey, adjudicate, administer, and teach the law of Christ to his church and (or) family. In either case, under the orthodox Christian worldview, the man is at all times the spiritual leader of both the home and the church. It is therefore not consistent with the orthodox conceptualization of priesthood to have a woman serve as pastor or priest.⁶ The church is, in essence, an extension of the traditional family (i.e.,

⁵ See, e.g, C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 402 (The priest is fundamentally a leader of families, and this is especially significant for the African American community: “[t]he **black family is the primary unit of the Black Church. The historic Black Church was a gathering of families** and extended families worshiping in a sanctuary they themselves erected, and buried in due course in the churchyard that was already hallowed by the memories of past generations it enshrined. There is **a symbiosis between the black family and the church** which makes for **mutual reinforcement** and creates for most black families **their initial or primary identity.**”)

⁶ For this reason, H.H. Pope Shenouda III, who was the 117th Pope of the Coptic Church, the Holy See of St. Mark, and the “Patriarch of Alexandria and all Africa,” Pope Shenouda has asked, if a man is the head of the home, then how can his wife be his priest in the church?

husband/ father (male); wife/mother (female); and children). See, e.g., Table 1, below, “Manhood: A Priestly Function in Church and Home.”

Table 1. Manhood: A Priestly Function in the Church and Home

Father (Church)	Father (Home)
Priest	Husband
Church	Home (Wife/ Children)
Obey/ Administer/ Teach Law of Christ	Obey/ Administer/ Teach Law of Christ

Indeed, Puritan families were believed to be small replicas of the larger Christian church. Puritans believed that the family (i.e., the household unit) to be ordained and sanctified by God. Family or household godly devotion was essential to Christian practice and an integral component to the larger Church body. The renowned, erudite Puritan Richard Baxter (1615-1691) has thus written:

It is the will of God that **rulers of families should teach those that are under them the doctrine of salvation**, i.e. the doctrine of God concerning salvation, and the terms on which it is to be had, and the means to be used for attaining it, and all the duties requisite on our parts in order thereunto.... Where I say men must thus teach, I imply they must be able to teach.... Family teaching must stand in a subordination to ministerial teaching, as families are subordinate to churches; and therefore, (1) Family teaching must give place to ministerial teaching, and never be set against it; you must not be hearing the master of a family, when you should be in a church hearing the pastor.... And therefore when any hard text or controversies fall in, the master [of the family] should consult the pastor for their exposition, unless it fall out that the master of the family be better learned in the Scripture than the pastor for their exposition, which is rare.... Now to the proof (remembering still that whatsoever proves it the ruler’s duty to teach, must needs prove it the family’s duty to learn, and to hearken to his teaching that they may learn.... Those that are to be chosen deacons or bishops, must be such as rule their own children and their own household well, 1 Tim. Iii. 4, 12.⁷

⁷ Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory (or, A Sum of Practical Theology, and Cases of Conscience)*, Part 2, *Economics* (reprinted in Columba, S.C. on January 18, 2019).

The **husband must undertake the principal part of the government of the whole family**, even of the wife herself.⁸

The husband must be the principal teacher of the family. He must instruct them and examine them, and rule them about the matters of God.... He must be as it were **the priest of the household**.⁹

Therefore **Christian families are called churches**, because they consist of holy persons, that worship God, and learn, and love, and obey his word....¹⁰

According to the orthodox viewpoint, all Christian men are “priests” in a sense, and indeed all Christians (male and female) constitute a “priesthood of all believers”; but the orthodox understanding of the ordained ministry is that it is set apart by God for special service in the Hebrew or Christian church—a strictly male function. Now, one of the primary duties of the priests—in addition to performing baptism and Holy Communion-- is to instruct other Christian men as to the voice of god, the law of god, and the true meaning of the Sacred Scriptures.

The priest, as pastor, is therefore “first among equals” and is given deference in terms interpreting the meaning of God’s holy laws. And this is especially significant when one considers the large variety of issues, problems, cases, and controversies that arose before the pastors and bishops of the early church. These issues often posed questions about important, practical problems that other Christian men faced and which required an interpretation as to the meaning of God’s holy laws as they applied to unique challenges facing men and manhood—**these were practical cases of conscience**. In this sense, the priest is also the “pastor” of the church—i.e., he is a counselor, advisor, advocate, ecclesiastical judge, and an interpreter of the divine and sacred laws of Holy Scriptures. See, e.g., Table 2, “The Priest, the Pastoral Ministry, and Cases of Conscience.”

As Table 2 shows, the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches, which were major social forces within Medieval and Early Modern Europe and England, developed western jurisprudence through a system of ecclesiastical and chancery courts. In fact, in England, the system of equity jurisprudence was developed from this system, as Anglo-American equity courts became known as “courts of conscience.” But even before the church became part of the Roman Empire, the pastors, elders and bishops—as evidenced by the letters of St. Paul—were called

⁸ Ibid., p. 60.

⁹ Ibid., p. 61.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 45.

upon to resolve important cases of conscience, practical problems, and even legal issues that arose in the church and between or among church members. Perhaps it is for this reason that St. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:2: “[d]o ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?”

Table 2. The Priest, the Pastoral Ministry, and “Cases of Conscience”

<p><u>The Church:</u></p> <p>Christian laymen/ lay Church members</p>	<p>-----></p>	<p><u>Law of God; Law of Christ:</u></p> <p>Lay Church Members encounter life challenges in the form of: Questions/ Problems/ Social or Political Problems</p>	<p>-----></p>	<p><u>Ecclesiastical Court/ Pastoral Judge/ Pastoral Counsellor or Advisor:</u></p> <p>Priests/ Pastors/ Elders/ Bishops/ Clergymen, etc.</p>	<p>-----></p>	<p><u>Problem Solving/ Conflict Resolution:</u></p> <p>Priest’s Application of moral laws of God; Law of Christ to Practical Questions/ Problems</p>
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In a highly sexualized society that strictly separated men from women, it would not have been practical or feasible for women to serve as a priest or pastor—to say nothing of the churches’ tradition and the plain text of the Sacred Scriptures. The priesthood was thus early and largely cut out of the need to interpret the life of men and the meaning of manhood.

When African slaves were brought into the Christian churches in North America, the need to establish separate churches for them was justified by the sheer fact that the genre of the “cases of conscience” which they encountered required a specialized ministry.¹¹ The African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded in 1787 as a result of specialized social conditions faced by African Americans and which had been addressed by Rev. Richard Allen (Methodist) and Rev. Absalom Jones (Anglican) through the Free African Society.¹² This separation did not mean that the church doctrine was any different in the African American churches, but simply that the circumstances, social standing, and conditions of the African American church congregations were starkly different from white American congregations, thus requiring a slightly different emphasis in ministerial focus, style of service, and gospel preaching.¹³ See, e.g., Table 3, “Priest, the

¹¹ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Pastoral Ministry, and Cases of Conscience Unique to African Americans.”¹⁴

Table 3, “Priest, the Pastoral Ministry, and Cases of Conscience Unique to African Americans.”

White American Church	Cases of Conscience
Black American Church	Cases of Conscience (Unique to the African American membership and community)

If we consider Lincoln and Mamiya’s thesis in *The Black Church in the African American Experience*,¹⁵ it is quite clear that the American Civil Rights Movement of the 50’s and 60’s was a culmination of the “black church” experience, and that America’s federal civil rights laws reflect “cases of conscience” unique to African Americans, as exemplified in the sermons and speeches of black clergymen such as Adam Clayton Powell and Martin Luther King, Jr. But today, one of the chief challenges to the historic Black Church is the 21st-century American Democratic Party is composed largely of non-black groups such as feminist women and the Lesbian-Gay-Transexual-Bisexual (LGTB) community. The pervasive secular ideal of “equality” presses even harder upon the doors of the church. It soon becomes difficult to honor Christian orthodoxy, because it is believed to be inherently discriminatory against both women and gays. Next comes the issue of “black women” and the argument that they compromise the majority of the church members within the Black Church but share a disproportionate share of leadership positions within this church. As Lincoln and Mamiya have stated:

In our historical overview we have attempted to show that the quest for parity by black preaching women derives largely from the African heritage of African American culture. Traditional African religions have usually given women a greater role in the religious sphere, from feminine depictions of certain deities, to roles as priestesses, diviners, herbalists, and midwives. It was, therefore, much more natural for black women to seek leading religious roles as preachers and pastors when the transition to Christianity was made. As a consequence, there

¹⁴ The phrase “Cases of Conscience” is taken from two sources: first, the English chancery court and its related jurisprudence; and, second, from Puritan theologian Richard Baxter’s seminal work, *A Christian Directory: A Sum of Practical Theology and Cases of Conscience*.

¹⁵ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990).

probably have been more black women preachers than white women preachers. Many of these black women have had to serve their churches in unofficial and unrecognized positions as preachers, or under titles as exhorters, evangelists and missionaries, and more often in sublimated career paths such as teaching. During the mass migrations of African Americans to the urban centers of the North beginning with World War I, many black women preachers avoided the strictures of the traditional black denominations by founding independent storefront churches. Today a few black women pastor independent, proprietary churches with substantial memberships. The issues of sexism and feminism in the black community are often overshadowed by the problem of race. Racism in American society is so pervasive and controlling in the lives of African Americans that the problems of sexual discrimination often get considerably less attention.¹⁶

It is my viewpoint, however, that the above quotation from Lincoln and Mamiya highlights **the need for the black church to remain zealous in defending orthodox Christian doctrine against quasi-Christian heresy that creeps in under the guise of Afrocentric culture and misperceptions of Afrocentric pride, as well as undue financial pressures from outside secular and political forces** which incorrectly assume that secular laws and ideologies must be incorporated into Christian theological doctrine.

Thus, to sum things up: the traditional theological view of the African American Church on family is that the husband or father (as “priest”) is fundamentally the leader of family, and that the only reasons for why he does not function properly today is due to slavery and racism. That theological view also encompasses the general family and social dynamic from within the African American community: “[t]he **black family is the primary unit of the Black Church. The historic Black Church was a gathering of families** and extended families worshipping in a sanctuary they themselves erected, and buried in due course in the churchyard that was already hallowed by the memories of past generations it enshrined. **There is a symbiosis between the black family and the church** which makes for mutual reinforcement and creates for most black families their initial or primary identity.”¹⁷

¹⁶ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 307.

¹⁷ C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 402.

Indeed, within the African American community, during the first several decades since 1900, the traditional point of view, which was bolstered by the Black church, was that African American men should be the natural and indispensable breadwinner, and the African American woman should be his helpmate. But by the 1980s, we began to feel a slow tilt in the opposite direction, and during the 1990s, with mass incarceration, the ravages of the crack cocaine epidemic, and the triumph of American feminism, the plight of the traditional black family was at its nadir! Therefore, during my student days during the late 1980s and early 90s, and influenced by an orthodox Christian worldview, I believed that there needed to be a fundamental shift nature of the national dialogue about “race” and “gender”; and I also believed that that there needed to be a fundamental shift in the position of African American men—not African American women—in the home, as the leader and as the breadwinner.¹⁸ See, e.g., Table 4, “Natural Law of Gender and Economic Development.”

Table 4. Natural Law of Gender and Economic Development

Employed Males	Unemployed Females (i.e., homemakers)	Strong traditional families (2 parent households); strong marriages; strong community cohesion; strong economic development.
Employed Females	Unemployed Males	Community dislocation; weak traditional families (Single parent households); decline in marriage; weak economic development; and social dislocation

At the same time, within the Black community, during the first several decades since 1900, the conventional wisdom was that a major reason that African Americans lagged behind their white counterparts, was because African American

¹⁸ In addition, in order to facilitate this shift, I believed that the African American church needed to seriously adjust how it conceptualized “pastoral ministry” and the qualifications of ministers—like the Roman Catholic priests, Black preachers needed a squadron of “assistant pastors” to flood the African American community to be available as “parish priests” and as first-responders to the underprivileged black community.

men were not allowed to discharge their paternal and conjugal roles as husbands and leaders within the home. Disparate income and discrimination between black and white men were often cited as a major and most significant concern. Black women were always available to perform as wives and mothers; but *Black men were simply not allowed a financial floor upon which to function properly as husbands and fathers.* See, e.g., Table 5, “American labor Market and Race, Gender, and Economic Development.”

Table 5. American Labor Market: Race, Gender, and Economic Development (A Theory of Gender and Pay Equity)

White Males	Strong Employment/ Very Strong Employment	Strong traditional families (2 parent households); strong marriages; strong community cohesion; strong economic development.
White Females	Strong employment/ Good employment	Strong traditional families (2 parent households); strong marriages; strong community cohesion; strong economic development.
Black Females	Strong employment/ Good employment	Community dislocation; weak traditional families (Single parent households); decline in marriage; weak economic development.
Black Males	Good employment/ Weak employment/ Very weak employment	Community dislocation; weak traditional families (Single parent households); decline in marriage; weak economic development.

Here, the historic African American church—together with the black college and university, black professionals and public officials, and public figures and influential celebrities —should take the lead. But not only that, the entire nation

should follow their lead! It would be a path forward with the least amount of governmental intrusion—a conservative push forward, without governmental entanglement, and one having the firm foundations of the Gospel. *And with that leadership will come also the final destruction of the last vestiges of chattel slavery on American soil.* See, e.g., Table 6, below:

Table 6. Need for a Shift in National Attitude towards African American Men as Heads of Household, Husbands, and Fathers (e.g., “Black Fathers and Husbands” First Programme)

African American Men	<p>Conceptualize themselves as “Puritan priests”— cultivating a deep and abiding spiritual leadership in subjection to Christ¹⁹— as fathers of their children and as husbands to their wives</p> <p>Accept full and complete responsibility for the plight of the African American family and community.</p> <p>Love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it. Therefore, cultivate a willingness to sacrifice and to die in the discharge of their priestly duties as husband/ father.</p>
African American Women	<p>Acknowledge African American men as the undisputed fathers, husbands, and leaders of the African American community</p> <p>Conceptualize themselves as Puritan “Good Wives” (See, e.g., <i>Good Wives</i>)²⁰ to African American husbands and fathers.</p>
White American Community	<p>Make a concerted effort to create and honor hiring preferences for African American men from disadvantaged communities</p>

¹⁹ Our Jewish or Moslem brothers have similar tenets within their Orthodox belief systems; and I am not opposed to concluding that even agnostics or atheists might adopt similar ethical parameters in the fulfillment of this obligation. The point is that a man must be subject to the Law of Christ (which is the law of selfless service and love).

²⁰ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 165-1750* (New York, N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1991).

Hispanic- American, Asian-American, Jewish-American, Native-American and other groups	Work together with African American men to improve labor-market outcomes of husbands/ fathers of color and to raise the standard of living of families of color
Christian Church Community	<p>The American Church needs to coordinate and administer this entire “Black Fathers and Husbands First” programme—American employers, the white and other non-black communities, the government— in implementing this change.</p> <p>Espouse the traditional view of gender, fatherhood, and priesthood.</p> <p>Establish a variety of creative outreach ministries to support African American husbands and fathers of color</p>

As Table 4 reveals, the “natural law” (i.e., the “law of Christ” or the “law of God”) regarding fatherhood, gender relations, and family government is readily apparent. Here, the African American husband or father would have daily, weekly, monthly, and perennial access to the pastoral ministry or parish priest, who would be readily available to provide support regarding concerns of conscience unique him. Not only that, this minister or priest, ideally, would be a well-trained, erudite, and spiritual leader who is thoroughly familiar with the modern social problems facing African American men and of the availability of social resources within the community. All of this, and more, would be available to help African American men meet their legal obligations as fathers under the secular law as well.

E. American Family Law is based upon the Father's Leadership, Authority and Responsibility, but the American Democratic Party Undermines Black Fathers' Leadership, Authority and Responsibility

Another critical question that may be fairly asked is this: Does the American Democratic Party seek to abolish the Christian foundations of American family law?

If the answer to that question is yes, then what impact will that have on the plight of the African American family? Lets we forget: the Anglo-American customary practices and traditions regarding the marriage covenant were extracted largely from St. Peter's and St. Paul's letters, together with other passages found in *The Holy Bible*, and were later molded and shaped through the Roman Church of England. In the West, for many centuries, the Roman Catholic Church monopolized the field of defining and interpreting the institution of marriage through its ecclesiastical courts in England and Western Europe. Its interpretation became the foundation of our knowledge and understanding of the institution of secular, civil marriage in the West.

The tragic fact of the American Democratic Party is that it never acknowledges the plain text and spirit of American Family Law, and that it plainly assigns to men and fathers the "legal duty" to lead, provide for, and protect the wife and children within a monogamous family household, and that for centuries African American men have been perennially blocked—by white men, white women, black women, and other black men—from discharging this God-given responsibility! This is perhaps the saddest evasion of both the American Democratic Party and the Black Church alike!

Significantly, *under traditional Anglo-American common law, and even under modern statutory law in many of the several states of the United States, the husband still bears the ultimate legal responsibility for supporting a wife and children.* This means that, despite all of their cultural and socioeconomic disadvantages, **African American men have collectively complete responsibility for African American mothers and children.** This responsibility is not only critically important in terms of economics, but it is profoundly spiritual, metaphysical, and eternal or extra-constitutional. See, e.g., Am Jur, Husband and Wife §§ 337-338, stating:

One of the most fundamental duties created by the law of domestic relations is that which **requires a man to support his wife and**

family. In some jurisdictions, the duty of support is imposed upon the husband by statutes, including those statutes intended to alleviate the public burden of caring for poor and helpless persons by requiring those persons who are closely connected by consanguinity or affinity with the poor to support the latter, but it exists apart from statute as a duty arising out of the marital relationship....

In some jurisdictions, each spouse has a statutory inchoate interest in the property of the other spouse to the extent of his or her necessary support. In most jurisdictions, this legal obligation is enforceable in a suit by the wife to compel her husband to support her. Furthermore, statutes generally make the failure of a husband to furnish support to his wife, in the absence of extenuating circumstances, a punishable crime.

A common-law rule renders a husband who is derelict in respect of his duty to furnish support to his wife liable for necessaries furnished her. In addition, there are statutes, in many jurisdictions, which render both husband and wife liable for family expenses and household supplies, but liability under such statutes is not predicted upon the failure of the husband to furnish support for his wife. In any event, **a husband is liable under his contract for goods and services furnished the family.** The law, moreover, recognizes the agency of the wife to contract in behalf of the husband for goods furnished and services rendered the family.

The duty of a husband to support his wife and family does not, of course, render him obligated to furnish support for collateral relatives of his wife....²¹

²¹ Nevertheless, and notwithstanding these legal duties and obligations of husbands to support their wives and children, no public provision is made generally for an equitable adjustment of the conjugal or paternal obligations of African American men toward their wives and children, notwithstanding the fact that most African American men have a very precarious position in the labor markets due to systematic binary racial-sexual discrimination. American employers have today largely designed jobs and job descriptions for women! And the jobs which give preference to African American men are typically dangerous, low-paying, heavy-industrial jobs—if they even exist—and professional sports. Moreover, the “wars on drugs and crime” of the 1980s and 90s have certainly stigmatized African American men in general as criminalized beings and social problems—making them undesirable workers (e.g., unwanted husbands and deadbeat dads) throughout the American labor market. It is therefore quite clear that a critical imbalance in American law is its failure to address the history and contemporary predicament of African American fathers within the household.

The biblical conception of the “father” is thus even more reflective of the nature of manhood. The “sex drive” within the African American man is of natural necessity, in order to propagate his human progeny, and this “sex-drive” must be governed or restrained, through fatherly tutelage and priestly mentors, toward the healthy and moral formation of family life.

But the underprivileged African American man’s ignorance, poverty, economic deprivation, and discriminatory treatment, in essence, stigmatizes him as unfit for being a husband and (or) fatherhood; and, the secular law “criminalizes” him when he defaults on these obligations—thus creating a major human rights catastrophe which the American church has thus far failed to address, and a constitutional crisis which the entire nation has thus far failed to acknowledge. In my view, only an all-male African American priesthood—as mediators on practical questions of conscience facing indigent African American men — can adequately address and lead on solving this crisis.

F. The American Democratic Party’s Evasion of the Plight of the African American Family May Violate Human Rights

Having thus lain the central premise that the current structure, programme, and platform of the American Democratic Party—unwittingly or not—undermines the plight of the African American family unit, we might also inquire into whether this evasion leads to the same social conditions from within the African American community that were produced by the institution of American slavery.

To be sure, that present plight of the African American family has its evil roots deep within the legacy of American slavery: Indeed, as William Goodell reminds us, in the *American Slave Code*:

SLAVES CANNOT CONSTITUTE FAMILIES.

Being Property, “Goods” and “Chattels Personal,” to all intents, constructions and purposes whatsoever, they have no claim on each other—no security from Separation—no Marital Rights—no Parental Rights—no Family Government—no Family Education—no Family Protection.

THE family relation originates in the institution of marriage, and exists not without it. **We have already proved that slaves cannot have families or be members of families**, by proving that they cannot be married. To this latter point, in its connection with the former, we cite the words of Judge Jay:

“A necessary consequence of slavery is the absence of the marriage relation. No slave can commit bigamy, because the law knows no more of the marriage of slaves than of the marriage of brutes. A slave may, indeed, be formally married, but so far as legal rights and obligations are concerned, it is an idle ceremony.” “Of course, **these laws do not recognize the parental relation, as belonging to slaves.** A slave has no more legal authority over his child than a cow has over her calf.” (Jay’s Inquiry, p. 132.)

The fact that the slave, as a chattel personal, may be bought, sold, transported from one place to another, mortgaged, attached, leased, inherited, and “distributed” in the settlement of estates, shows plainly that slaves cannot constitute families.

“In the slaveholding States, except in Louisiana, no law exists to prevent the violent separation of parents from their children, or even from each other.” (Stroud’s Sketch, p. 50.)

“Slaves may be sold and transferred from one to another without any statutory restriction or limitation, as to the separation of parents and children, &c., except in the State of Louisiana.” (Wheeler’s Law of Slavery, p. 41.)

This has been the condition of American slaves in every period of our history, since their first introduction among us. John Woolman, the philanthropist, a minister of the Society of Friends, residing in New-Jersey, bears the following testimony concerning the slaveholders of his times, (A.D. 1757):

“They often part men from their wives by selling them far asunder, which is common when estates are sold by executors at vendue.” (Journal of the Life of John Woolman, London edition, p. 74.)

At a later period than this, according to a well-authenticated tradition in the neighborhood, a Congregational minister at Hampton, Conn., (Rev. Mr. Moseley), separated by sale a husband and wife who were both of them members of his own church, and who had been, by his own officiating act as a minister, united in marriage. Yet no legal or ecclesiastical proceedings grew out of the transaction. Some thought it a hard case, but the sufferers were only negroes and slaves.

It is the common understanding at the South, that slaves do not constitute families. It is the common understanding of the county at large. The **American Bible Society, many years ago, proposed to supply each family in the United States with a Bible.** After a long effort, it was announced by the Society that the great work was completed. **It was afterwards ascertained that no part of the supply went to the then two and a half millions of slaves.** The Society made no apology for its mistake, nor acknowledged that it had committed any. Public sentiment in general (with exception of abolitionists) attributed to them no error. **The nation knew nothing about families of slaves!**

The practice corresponds with the theory. The statement that follows is from Sarah M. Grimke, daughter of the late Judge Grimke, of Charleston, S. C.:

“A slave who had been separated from his wife, because it best suited the convenience of his owner, ran away. He was taken up on the plantation where his wife, to whom he was tenderly attached, then lived. His only object in running away was to return to her; no other fault was attributed to him. For this offense he was confined in the stocks six weeks, in a miserable hovel, not weather-tight. He received fifty lashes weekly during that time, was allowed food barely sufficient to sustain him, and when released from confinement, was not permitted to return to his wife. His master, although himself a husband and a father, was unmoved by the touching appeals of the slave, who entreated that he might only remain with his wife, promised to discharge his duties faithfully; his master continued inexorable, and he was torn from his wife and family. The owner of this slave was a professing Christian, in full membership with the church, and this circumstance occurred

while he was in his chamber, during his last illness.” (Weld’s Slavery as it is, p. 23.)

The following is from Mrs. Angelina Grimke Weld, sister of the preceding witness:

“Chambermaids and seamstresses often sleep in their mistresses’ apartments, but with no bedding at all. I know of an instance of a woman who has been married eleven years, and yet has never been allowed to sleep out of her mistress’s chamber. This is a great hardship to slaves. When we consider that house slaves are rarely allowed social intercourse during the day, as their work generally separates them, the barbarity of such an arrangement is obvious. It is peculiarly a hardship in the above case, as the husband of the woman does not ‘belong’ to her ‘owner,’ and because he is subject to dreadful attacks of illness, and he can have but little attention from his wife in the day. And yet her mistress, who is an old lady, gives her the highest character as a faithful servant, and told a friend of mine that she was entirely dependent on her for all her comforts; she dressed and undressed her, gave her all her food, and was so necessary to her that she could not do without her. I may add that this couple are tenderly attached to each other.”

“I know an instance in which the husband was a slave, and the wife was free. During the illness of the former, the latter was allowed to come and nurse him; she was obliged to leave the work by which she made a living, and come to stay with her husband, and thus lose weeks of her time, or he would have suffered for want of proper attention; and yet this ‘owner’ made her no compensation for her services. He had long been a faithful and a favorite slave, and his owner was a woman very benevolent to the poor whites.” “She, no doubt, only thought how kind she was to allow her to come and stay so long in her yard.” (Ib., p. 56.)

“Persons who own plantations and yet live in the cities often take their children from them as soon as they are weaned, and send them into the country; because they do not want the time

of the mother taken up with attendance upon her own children, it being too valuable to the mistress. As a favor she is sometimes permitted to go to see them once a year. So, on the other hand, if the field slaves happen to have children of an age suitable to the convenience of the master, they are taken from their parents and brought to the city. Parents are almost never consulted as to the disposition to be made of their children, and they have as little control over them as have domestic animals over the disposal of their young. Every natural and social feeling and affection are violated with indifference. Slaves are treated as though they did not possess them.” (lb., pp. 56-7.)

It is today well acknowledged that this evil system existed within the institution of slavery, but when slavery was abolished, many of its evil tendencies lingered through custom or usage or similar practices. For example, as I have memorialized in my book *Labor Matters: the African American Labor Crisis, 1861-Present* (2015):

The color line of the twentieth century was established in 1896 in the Supreme Court’s infamous case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, which upheld racial segregation. But the American color line had deep roots in the American slave codes as well. Those old slave codes lumped multiracial Africans (i.e., mulattoes) into the same class as the unmixed African slaves. Florida’s antebellum statutes explicitly mention mulattoes and treat them as ‘slaves,’ ‘Negroes,’ ‘free Negroes,’ etc....

In the antebellum South white fathers usually disowned their multiracial children and were willing to relegate them to the status of slaves. Indeed, in many states the race of the mother determined the race of the child, precisely to achieve the perpetual subordination of mulatto children to the same status as the other darker-skinned African American slaves.

Writing on this same point, **Frederick Douglass** observed that **‘[s]lavery had no recognition of fathers, as none of families**. That the mother was a slave was enough for its deadly purpose. By its law the child followed the condition of its mother. The father might be a freeman and the child a slave. The father might be a white man, glorying in the purity of his Anglo-Saxon blood, and his child ranked

with the blackest slaves. Father he might be, and not be husband, and could sell his own child without incurring reproach, if in its veins coursed one drop of African blood.’

‘[W]hile Africa is the land of our mothers,’ Booker T. Washington once observed, ‘the fathers of about a million and a half of us are to be found in the South among the blue-blooded Anglo-Saxons.’

And W.E.B. Du Bois once decried, “O Southern Gentlemen! If you deplore their [African Americans] presence here, thy ask, Who brought us? Why you cry, Deliver us from the vision of intermarriage, they answer that legal marriage is infinitely better than systematic concubinage and prostitution. And if in just fury you accuse their vagabonds of violating women, they also in fury quite as just my reply: The wrong which your gentlemen have done against helpless black women in defiance of your own laws is written on the foreheads of two million of mulattoes, and written in ineffaceable blood.’

Similarly, while commenting on the system of ‘Jim Crow’ racial segregation in the South during the early twentieth century, James Weldon Johnson observed that ‘a white gentleman may not eat with a colored person without the danger of serious loss of social prestige; yet he may sleep with a colored person without incurring the risk of any appreciable damage to his reputation.... [E]very thinking Southern white man understands clearly: ‘Social equality’ signifies a series of far-flung barriers against amalgamation of the two races; except so far as it may come about by white men with colored women.’

We might also consider Dr. E. Franklin Frazier’s²² seminal classic *Black Bourgeoisie* (1957), which unbraided the *urban* African American middle classes on several fronts, including their mangled relationships between middle-class

²² E. Franklin Frazier (1894-1962)(Ph.D., University of Chicago). Dr. Frazier “was an American sociologist and author, publishing as E. Franklin Frazier. His 1932 Ph.D. dissertation was published as a book titled *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939); it analyzed the historical forces that influenced the development of the African-American family from the time of slavery to the mid-1930s. The book was awarded the 1940 Anisfield-Wolf Book Award for the most significant work in the field of race relations. It was among the first sociological works on blacks researched and written by a black person. In 1948 Frazier was elected as the first black president of the American Sociological Association. He published numerous other books and articles on African-American culture and race relations. In 1950 Frazier helped draft the UNESCO statement *The Race Question*.”
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E._Franklin_Frazier

African American women who dominated their black-male companions and husbands!²³ Even during the days when racial segregation was predominant, Dr. Frazier's work *Black Bourgeoisie* concluded that *urban* middle-class African American women generally dominated their husbands—resulting in lost confidence, humiliation, and depression within that specific class of middle-class African American men.²⁴ Interestingly, Dr. Frazier even observed during the 1950s that, within the area of civil rights, these urban middle-class African American women could often play a more militant role than their husbands, because the white-dominated power structure tended to more readily and rapidly crush militant African American men—this led Dr. Frazier to describe “the Negro” as, to paraphrase him, “the lady among the races,”²⁵—a description which he did not state as a compliment or as a positive development!²⁶ Such description, to be sure, subverts the natural-law, common-law, and statutory obligations of African American men to discharge their obligations as fathers.

Does the American Democratic Party think that it can ignore this awful history, court African American female votes, ignore the fundamental rights and needs of African American fathers, and continue to believe that it is doing a great service to the African American community?

G. Where Does the African American Church go from here?

The Black Church in the United States cannot have a positive impact upon the plight of the African American family until it recognizes that, outside of the wall of the institution of the Church, at least in the United States of America, the African American woman is juxtaposed and pitted off against the African American man—through feminism, through economic competition, through racism, and the like.

Since 1970, the economic pressures on the working-class African American

²³ See, generally, E. Franklin Frazier, *Black Bourgeoisie* (New York, N.Y.: Free Press Paperbacks, 1957).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, P. 221 (“As one of the results of not being able to play the ‘masculine role,’ middle-class Negro males have tended to cultivate their ‘personalities’ which enable them to exercise considerable influence among whites and achieve distinction in the Negro world. Among Negroes they have been noted for their glamour. In this respect they resemble women.... This fact would seem to support the observation of an American sociologist that the Negro was ‘the lady among the races,’ if he had restricted his observation to middle-class males among American Negroes. In the South the middle-class Negro male is not only prevented from playing a masculine role, but generally he must let Negro women assume leadership in any show of militancy. This reacts upon his status in the home where the tradition of female dominance, which is widely established among Negroes, has tended to assign a subordinate role to the male.”).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

family and the increasing incarceration and unemployment of working-class black men created a metamorphosis in the psychology of black-male/ black-female interrelationships and a revolution in the African American household, which is today largely headed by black females.²⁷ Slowly but surely, starting in the last two decades of the twentieth century, and continuing on through the early decades of the twenty-first century, black females were deemed slightly more qualifiedly employable into responsible positions than black males. This phenomenon has historic origins. From the end of the Civil War through the 1970s, the impact of history continued to influence, instruct, and cripple black male/ black female relations and family formation.

[T]he status of black women can be viewed from two different viewpoints: one, as members of the larger society; two, within their own group. When they are considered as Blacks among Blacks, they have higher status within their own group than do white women in white society. This paradox is the direct result of the special relationship of white society to black women: because the lowest-status, lowest paid jobs in white society are reserved for black women, they often can find work even when black men cannot. In fact, one can say quite definitely that white society has economically pitted black women against black men.... The financially independent and often better-educated black woman has higher status within her family than some men, although there are many black families with husbands holding steady jobs which follow the usual middle-class family pattern. The greater equality in relations between black men and black women, which are perceived between black men and black women, which are perceived and expressed by many black authors in their writings, may well be due more to the embattled situation of the black family and the constant stress and danger with which it is faced in a

²⁷ "Slavery not only impoverished Blacks, it distorted and corrupted the structure of the Black family. In a survey of 612 Black families in rural Georgia in the 1930s, Black sociologist Charles Johnson found vivid evidence of communal disorganization: 29% of all children were illegitimate, and 25% of families were headed by a female; though an additional 37% of families were headed by married couples, the rest were common-law households. Johnson noted that 'sex, as such, appears to be a thing apart from marriage.' This is comparable to the function of sex in the slave system, where it was mostly 'a thing apart from marriage'—a practice permitted by slave masters.... [Demographer Philip] Hauser [conducted a five-decade study in which he] located the problem of endemic poverty in the institution of slavery, which denied many Blacks the opportunity to adopt a middle-class family lifestyle. However, he suggested that its most devastating impact was on the Black male, who, both within the slave system and thereafter, was unable 'because of the lack of opportunity and discriminatory practices, to assume the role of provider and protector of his family in accordance with prevailing definitions of the role of husband and father.' Because of substantial damage to 'normative' Blacks and consequently to their families and social structure, they have been relatively more dependent upon the state." Ronald Walters, *White Nationalism Black Interests* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State Univ. Press, 2004), pp. 149-150.

hostile world than any other factor.²⁸

For as Dr. Pauline Murray²⁹ observed:

In the course of their climb, Negro women have had to fight against the stereotypes of ‘female dominance’ on the one hand and loose morals on the other hand, both growing out of the roles forced upon them during the slavery experience and its aftermath. But out of their struggle for human dignity, they also developed a tradition of independence and self-reliance.... Like the Western pioneer settlements, the embattled Negro society needed the strength of all of its members in order to survive. The economic necessity for the Negro woman to earn a living to help support her family—if indeed she was not the sole support—fostered her independence and equalitarian position....³⁰

Similarly, during the early 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. seemed to criticize the growing emphasis on white women’s rights and white women’s liberation in his seminal classic *Why We Can’t Wait*, stating: “[The Negro] knows that the spotlight recently focused on the growth in the number of women who work is not a phenomenon in Negro life. The average Negro woman has always had to work to help keep her family in food and clothes.”³¹

Thus, the general economic independence of black women alongside the labor-market challenges faced by black men have created an economic competition between black males and black females that is both unnatural and unique.³² There is no other similar economic competition between both sexes within the same racial group; that is to say, the struggles of American white females have not been similarly juxtaposed with white male incarceration, unemployment, and suppression.³³ And the Latino family structure, at least not as of this writing, does not appear to suffer from the same pathological deterioration as the black family

²⁸ Gerda Lerner, *Black Women In White America: A Documentary History* (New York: N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1972), pp. xxiv-xxv.

²⁹ Dr. Pauline Murray was the first African American to receive the S.J.D. degree from Yale University.

³⁰ Gerda Lerner, *Black Women In White America: A Documentary History* (New York: N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1972), p. 594.

³¹ James M. Washington, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1986), p. 524.

³² See, e.g., Ralph Richard Banks, *Is Marriage for White People: How the African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone* (New York, NY: Dutton/ Penguin Group, 2011), pp. 84-102.

³³ *Ibid.*

structure.³⁴ Today, black females who are successful in the American labor market face a shortage of similarly-situated black males who can marry them, and so social and psychological tension persists.³⁵ Black females as a whole have not conscientiously joined forces with the “white male—white female—non-white immigrant” labor combination to suppress black males from entering into the labor market—although it is possible that some black females have conscientiously done so.³⁶

Conversely, the “white male- white female—non-white immigrant” labor combination continues to give an employment preference to black females over black males for their diversity initiatives and equal employment opportunity compliance.

On occasion, some observers of U.S. racial relations have asked whether black women face more or less discrimination than black men in pursuing their employment goals and careers. Explicitly addressing a question on the subject, our respondents were often very thoughtful in their replies. A male college graduate in the West saw some important differences:

‘There are definitely systematic differences. [Black] women are perceived as being less of a threat, more passive than men. They are seen as feminine, weak. [White males] feel like they can manipulate women by virtue of their sex, manifest many different ways, through sex bias jokes, or gender type things like, that’s a man’s job. Or, ‘honey you don’t want to get your dress dirty, or something.’ ... Black males are perceived to be powerful, a threat. In his view the black male image that is frightening to many whites on the street has a counterpart in the workplace. Black women are seen as less of a threat because they can be manipulated in sexist ways.’³⁷

³⁴ Gerda Lerner, *Black Women In White America: A Documentary History* (New York: N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1972); A.L. Reynolds III, *Do Black Women Hate Black Men?* (Mamaroneck, N.Y.: Hastings House Book Publishers, 1994); and Ralph Richard Banks, *Is Marriage For White People: How The African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Group, 2011).

³⁵ See, e.g., Ralph Richard Banks, *Is Marriage for White People: How the African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone* (New York, NY: Dutton/ Penguin Group, 2011).

³⁶ See, e.g., Gerda Lerner, *Black Women In White America: A Documentary History* (New York: N.Y.: Vintage Books, 1972); A.L. Reynolds III, *Do Black Women Hate Black Men?* (Mamaroneck, N.Y.: Hastings House Book Publishers, 1994); and Ralph Richard Banks, *Is Marriage For White People: How The African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Group, 2011).

³⁷ Joe R. Feagin and Melvin P. Sikes, *Living With Racism: The Black Middle-Class Experience* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 181-183.

This employment preference creates labor-market competition and jealousy between black male and black female workers.³⁸ Most recently in 2011, Stanford University law professor Richard Banks observed a similar phenomenon regarding tensions in relations between black men and women, where the black women earned more money or played a more dominant role in the relationship.

Whatever the drawbacks of the conventional role-divided marriage, one virtue is that everyone knows their job. Roles, if constricting, are at least understood: The husband provides economically, while the wife cares for the home and the children. When a wife out-earns her husband, the couple cannot conform to that conventional male-breadwinner model. Rather than adhere to predefined roles, they have no choice but to improvise, to attempt to fashion their own model of a relationship as they patch together expectations developed during their own coming of age. Many husbands find it difficult to accept a subordinate economic role in the family. They know they don't earn the bulk of the income, but they might still feel that they should.³⁹

A 2010 report issued by the Pew Research Center, 'Women, Men, and the New Economics of Marriage,' found that when the husband is the primary earner, each member of the couple is equally likely to have the final say about how money is spent; but that when the wife is the primary earner, she is more than twice as likely as her husband to have the final say about financial decisions. It seems that if the husband earns the money, it is assumed to belong to the family. When the wife earns the money, it is more likely to be viewed as hers.⁴⁰

These tensions about gender roles no doubt help to explain the empirical finding that marriages in which the wife earns substantially more than the husband seem to be more likely to dissolve than marriages in which the husband is the primary earner. I wouldn't find it surprising if such marriages are more conflict ridden.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ralph Richard Banks, *Is Marriage for White People: How the African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone* (New York, NY: Dutton/ Penguin Group, 2011), pp. 181-183.

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 99-100.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 101.

In sum, from 1970 to the present, the folkways, mores, habits, and traditions underpinning African American marriages have been significantly impacted by the labor market outcomes of black male and female wage earners.⁴²

CONCLUSION

Therefore, for all of the foregoing reasons, **the African American church's first and most important function must be the preservation of the African American family unit, through sacred Anglo-American common law tradition that is the heritage of the Church of England past down to every major Black Church denomination.** I believe that the Church of England's influence over the English common law's definition of marriage was largely embraced wholeheartedly by the first African Baptist and Methodist churches. If the application of the English common law on Christian marriage could be applied to the African slaves, then they could move one step closer towards full and complete freedom. *Otherwise, the institution of African slavery could not be abolished or completely eradicated until the English common law on Christian marriage was fully applicable to African Americans in the United States.* For this reason, the conventional English common law definition of Christian marriage -- after having been withheld from African slaves, during American slavery for 240 years-- was *the key to liberating underprivileged African American mothers and fathers from their lingering badges and incidents of chattel slavery in the United States.* Thus, the primary role of the

⁴² I hasten to add that economic causes of Black family break-down pre-date 1970. See, e.g., W.E. B. Du Bois, *Darkwater: Voices From Within The Veil* (New York, N.Y.: Washington Square Press, 2004), pp. 139-140 ("Among native white women one in ten is separated from her husband by deaths, divorce, or desertion. Among Negroes the ratio is one in seven. Is the cause racial? No, it is economic, because there is the same high ratio among white foreign-born. The breaking up of the present family is the result of modern working and sex conditions and it hits the laborers with terrible force. The Negroes are put in a peculiarly difficult position, because the wage of the male breadwinner is below the standard, while the openings for colored women in certain lines of domestic work, and now in industries, are many. Thus while toil holds the father and brother in country and town at low wages, the sisters and mothers are called to the city.")

Black Church in America continues to revolve largely around teaching the highest of Christian ethics and moral standards to underprivileged African Americans. And included within that role was promoting the institution of Christian marriage.⁴³

Yours Faithfully,

Roderick O. Ford

Minister Roderick O. Ford
Reformed Methodist

⁴³ I have never observed within the American Democratic Party an interest in ameliorating the plight of the African American family. In fact, America's two-party political and governmental system does not—and, indeed, cannot—bring African American men and women together to form monogamous marriage and family.