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Daniel White Hodge

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REMIXING THE POST-CIVIL RIGHTS ERA: RESPONDING TO DANIELS' *A CONVERGENT MODEL OF RENEWAL*

DANIEL WHITE HODGE

I am not of the Quaker tradition. In fact, most of my knowledge of who Quakers are has come through my friendship and collegial connection to the author of this book I am reviewing, Wess Daniels. I was raised in a Christian home as a Seventh Day Adventist and most of the outside world, unless they too were Adventist, was considered "lost" or "without truth." Thus, for the better portion of my childhood, my religious life was one-tracked.[1] As I grew older I began to think a bit more for myself and moved away from the faith into a nihilistic state of mind—growing up in the 80's during the crack era and having death and pain all around you as a constant state reinforced that God was questionable in His existence, to say the least. By the time April 29, 1992 came—the Los Angeles Rodney King uprisings—I had moved toward the Islamic faith and was a part of the Nation of Islam. It was relevant and provided me with a contextual image and symbol of Jesus: a Black man. That worked for a while, until I had a vision God sent to me in a dream in which I knew specifically I was to enter ministry and return to Christianity. Over the years my theological constructs have developed and now I find myself as a thinker of Christianity while evolving with the faith, a good time indeed. I have merged my cultures of urban and Hip Hop to create a space in finding God that intersects with the sacred, the secular, and the profane. Hip Hop theology[2] has the space to create, think, and renew. This is where Daniels' text enters and in a unique space he creates a new conversation, rooted in Quaker theology, yet broad enough to encompass something like Hip Hop and a post-soul context.[3]

Daniels' text gives a roadmap and a contemporary take on renewal within the context of the current era, an era which tends to look upon religion—particularly Christianity—with suspicion and distrust. Daniels begins a much needed conversation, giving context to renewal, not just within the Quaker tradition, but within almost any faith tradition. In my own process, I have had a continual renewal

of the old, tradition, culture, and the new as to what it means to be Black, male, Mexican, a scholar, a dad, and a follower of Jesus; renewal. Renewal is direly needed. One need only look at the political race of 2016 to know that a firm grip on the old, the traditional, and those religious mores that made "sense" to a generation ago, are still alive and well. Moreover, they stunt faith development and keep us pegged in tight corners. Daniels argues against that. Daniels takes up a conversation of renewing the mind, the body, and the spirit— while keeping the old in tension—and moving forward with the new. Wilbert Shenk reminds us that, "A relevant missiology will be one that helps the church embrace its mission fully through clear discernment of the times, together with a vision of what a dynamic missionary response requires."[4] And this is where Daniels's takes us—into a relevant missiology that renews while keeping onto history, wisdom, and the older parts that make sense and bring value to the faith. As Daniels states, "…to construct a convergent model of participatory renewal rooted in the insights of Alasdair MacIntyre, Stephen Bevans, and Henry Jenkins" (19).

Therefore, what follows, is an exploration of Daniels' model of renewal using a Hip Hop and urban cultural lens set apart from the Quaker tradition. Thinking about conditions separate from Quaker traditions, I focus largely on questions of context, culture, and faith rooted in a post-soul context. From my academic position, I find most useful Daniels' schematic for understanding changes that are connected to Christian cultural change. Thus, I have constructed my remarks specifically on Daniels' chapter four, "A Convergent Model for Participatory Renewal," and the themes I found in that chapter. My desire is that these comments can steer us closer to this renewal of faith that our society, principally here in the North American continent, so direly needs.

The Post-Soul/Post-Civil Rights Location of Daniels' Text

It is no mystery that something culturally, societally, politically, and ideologically has shifted within the last sixty years; Daniels makes note of this (126,162-164). The prefix 'post' is affixed to words such as modernism, millennial, and Christian. 'Post,' and then fill in the blank, is a cliché term and has found its way into many Christian scholars' work—including my own. Whatever we want to call it, something

happened and the 'ground zero' for this shift begins to occur after WWII.[5] This led to the 1950's where an era in popular culture and in the collective imagination of dominant culture that created archetype religious themes such as:

- Moral authority and dominion of men (White, heterosexual, & affluent)

- The Christian church as the sending agent to the world[6]

- Morality and values rest with the homogenous family from America

- Father knows best or at least has the privilege to do so

- America is God's nation

- America as the moral and religious authority for all nations

- America as a model for what is "right" and "just" (e.g. the winning of WWII and salvation of Jewish people from Nazi Germany)

- Christianity as the authoritative religion in the U.S. and as the moral proxy for the country

- Faith and family, from a heteronormative perspective, are normative

- White male dominance and chief power structure for religious and missional authority

WWII marks the last "just war"[7] for our country and a time when simplicity, binary ways of life (e.g. right is right, wrong is wrong, sin is clear, and morality is the pathway), Christianity/ faith, and a conservative view of life was prevalent. It was a time when mission-sending churches saw themselves as moral managers for the "spreading of the Gospel." The era following WWII created the U.S. as a popular global police officer who felt its authority was just that, global. Religiously, the growth of the mega-church, the expansion of churches into the suburbs (e.g. White flight), and the development of professionalized ministry service created a conglomerate of Christianity that would enter into a commodified epoch. That period between 1945 and1958 was a period of economic growth for the U.S. and for churches, too.[8] It began what has come to be known as the Christian marketplace in which Christian material goods, created a marketplace for training, methods, and evangelism; it also represents a large part what is called the McDonaldization of church.[9] Daniels'

work is positioned to challenge these older notions of "Church" and "missions."

But the 1960's created a disruption to this way of life,[10] and the ensuing civil rights movement, which was rooted in evangelical Christianity, began to create a riff in those ideals for the American Christian.[11] The 1960's also saw the creation of electronic grids that would later make way for the information age and internet infrastructure, the development of marketplace knowledge beyond libraries, and the creation of information in transmediated forms (e.g. news shows) gave way for an era that gave the U.S. population a sort of awakening to the harsh truth to injustice, disinheritance, and social anomie for many of its ethnic minority citizens.[12] The 1960s saw the coming of age for the Baby-Boomer generation whose ideals laid the foundation for five main post-industrial taxonomies:

1. The questioning of moral authority
2. Disruption of normative ideologies
3. The movement away from ideals about faith, religion, and spirituality established after WWII
4. The civic and societal intolerance of inequality and racism
5. Voices from the marginalized

These five post-industrial taxonomies are alien to the Christianity of the 1950s. And while, ideally, one could imagine that progress would dictate change in the Christianity of the 1950s, many of those principles, if not all in some regard, are still present today. They drive a lot of political discourse, the clinging to of denominationalism, the fear and panic toward the loss of "morality in society," and how many evangelicals theologize today. Daniels picks up the conversation, in a strong Quaker tradition, right there; within the tension of the modern and post-modern and within those spaces, he brazenly asserts his thesis of renewal and remix.

DANIELS' BOOK AS A MODEL OF POST-COLONIAL & A POST-CIVIL RIGHTS RENEWAL

Daniels' text creates a model that fits well within this post-soul context. Because it questions and engages participatory culture, Daniels is able to navigate a line that is filled with critical minds, voices, and insight and often destroys ideas rooted in faith and religion. Yet, I found that

Daniels' own critical insight fits well with the culture of critique so often associated with the post-soul context. Daniels states,

> American culture today could be described as a 'society of spectacle,' where desires are manufactured and emotions manipulated. Ours is a society driven by consumption and branding, forcing inauthentic and manufactured choices for happiness on people (114).

This is part of what Daniels refers to as authentic resistance (113). This is crucial and a well-received ideological construct for the Hip Hop mind. Resistance to tradition, norms, dominant culture, oppression, and dominant ideological norms are all crucial. As Daniels tells us, "What is essential to this productive and authentic resistance is that it strips away all that encumbers, all the social contrivances that become obstacles to a deeply authentic experience" (113). Once again, this is familiar territory to those in Hip Hop and post-soul culture.

In essence, this is about resisting while keeping aspects of tradition. I find this to be both refreshing and central to Daniels' text. Some scholars who argue against hegemonic authority tend to cast it all out—it is all "bad" or "negative" and thereby it needs to be reconstituted in an entirely different manner. While, this is true for some aspects and instances, Daniels asserts that tradition should be renewed while movement forward is done (e.g. 110-111). It is the "remix" that allows the old, the new, and the traditional to stay—all in tension. In that tension is the renewal while maintaining a form of resistance. This is worthy of sheer genius on one level and on yet another, it creates a set of issues as one cannot simply "throw away" parts or overlook customs that are crucial to a remix of faith.

What makes this a great fit for the Hip Hop community is that *authentic resistance* asks for participation, not exclusion. Often missionaries, or whoever comes with authority, teach those who are to be taught while leaving them out of the development conversation. This, historically, has been a negative process and one can only imagine the racial implications here.[13] Daniels, however, says that this "… authentic and productive resistance leads a community to be cultural producers,"(114) that empowers and invests back into the people, rather than having them be subject to a hegemonic authority that has little knowledge of who they even are. Again, this is direly needed as a new generation of urban and ethnic-minority youth push back against White American Evangelicalism and a Christianity that has, by in large, left out the narrative of those oppressed and disenfranchised.

Remix is a precise approach to a post-civil rights generation in regards to their connection with liturgy as something from the "old" must be recognized while creating new spaces for post-soul theologies. This remix is nothing short of difficult, however. It will remain contentious to those steeped in what Kelly Brown Douglas refers to as the tradition of authoritative interpretations of scripture[14] as it will face the authority of tradition and power. Yet, it is a worthwhile endeavor.

Open Work creates access and empowerment; crucial in spaces which experience oppression; this is also key in pushing beyond Western Evangelical Christianity and Daniels creates a great process for this (115-116). Open work focuses on participatory culture and creates community.

Lastly, *Alternative participatory community* presents the most radical of all the convergent models of renewal. Daniels is audacious enough to believe that this could create a utopia (116)! While I would push against the central notion of this for the Hip Hop post-soul context as a whole, with the timeline of said utopia, the model is nonetheless aggressive and needed in the process of renewal (116-117). Daniels' models present a contextual and radical approach to deconstructing hegemonic powers and provide space for movements like BLM (Black Lives Matters) and Hip Hoppers.

CONCLUSIONS: RENEWAL NEEDED

If one is to develop theological constructs for this era, a renewal model is then exclusively needed. Renewal of:

- Ideological structure
- Worldviews
- Race, gender, & class
- The Godhead

Daniels work provides that layout in a concise manner while valuing tradition. Creating innovative approaches for an innovative and unpredictable era. The book, as the preface states, "walks the walk" and takes on theoretical principles with the ability to apply them in a praxiological manner for a new generation of thinkers. The post-soul context and the Hip Hop community, as I would argue, provide the needed space for Christian renewal to happen. Daniels lays out a

great plan for that, while it should not be taken as a "fix-all" method (Daniels would agree; cf. 114), it is a useable and valid one that fits well within this present era.

My dream is that we can continue this conversation, explore new pathways, dismantle Christian hegemonic authority, and using Hip Hop as the vehicle to renew/ remix, create a missiology with the Hip Hop generation for a new modus of operation for Christianity in the 21st century. The time is now. The people are ready. And I truly believe God is at work in areas that we simply cannot see with the naked eye until we get up close, intimate, and personal. It's time for a church and missiology of renewal and remix!

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ENDNOTES

1. This is not to suggest that all Adventists are one-tracked and exclusionary, but my upbringing in this specific church was so.

2. That theological space which is premised on the foundation elements of Hip Hop: love, peace, unity, and a love for God. It is also involved five core theological precepts: a theology of suffering, community, the Hip Hop Jesuz, social action, and the profane, See Daniel White Hodge, *The Hostile Gospel: Exploring Socio-Theological Traits in The Post-Soul Context of Hip Hop*, ed. Warren Goldstein, Center for Critical Research on Religion and Harvard University (Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2016), Chapter 1; Daniel White Hodge, *The Soul Of Hip Hop: Rimbs Timbs & A Cultural Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), Chapter 2.

3. The post-soul era is the context following the soul era, 1945-1970, and similar to what is termed the postmodern period. The post-soul context/ era lost its leadership and this emerging generation, those born from 1971 on, was disconnected from previous ones. The youth born during this time were disconnected and disjointed from society. Moreover, with the rise in the absence of Black fathers during this time, Angela J Hattery and Earl Smith, *African American Families* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2007), 9-37. Black youth, especially, found it difficult to adjust in a world that was not socially, religiously, and morally logical to them. This era created the first Hip Hop Generation.

4. Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Relevance of a Messianic Missiology for Mission Today," in *The Transfiguration of Mission: Biblical Theological & Historical Foundations*, ed. Wilbert R. Shenk (Scottdale, PA; Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press, 1993), 30.

5. David sills notes that there was a rapid growth in missionaries post WWII leading into the 1960s and that this was one of the largest growths for missiology as the discipline was being developed, "The Future of the Discipl;ine of Missiology: Missiology in a Changing World Since World War II," in *American Society of Missiology* (Chicago, IL2012), 1-2. Also see Brian M. Howell, *Short-term mission : an ethnography of Christian travel narrative and experience* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 45-65.

6. One need only read Harvie M. Conn, "Reaching the unreached : the old-new challenge" (Phillipsburg, N.J., 1984); David MacDonald Paton, *Christian missions and the judge-ment of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953); Donald A. McGavran, *Effective evangelism : a theological mandate* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1988). to get an oversight of how North American Christians felt about being the "senders" of society, today, as Jenkins and others contend, that paradigm has and is vastly changing Philip Jenkins, "The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity ". (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011).

7. It was the last time that congress enacted the war powers and declared war on a country. All other "wars" have merely been defined as operations, maneuvers, or missions. WWII also created the U.S. as the chief police officer of the world. Images and cinematic events reflected these social agents as well and created a paradigm that many, especially those who are White and conservative, desire to return to Norman K. Denzin, *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 1991).

8. Also see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Constants in context : a theology of mission for today* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2004), 239-79.for a detailed look into the socio-political, religious, and institutional context of the Christian church between the years of 1919-1991.

9. This argument is made clear in the works of John William Drane, *The McDonaldization of the church : spirituality, creativity, and the future of the church* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2000); George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2000). And the arguments here is that the growth of marketplace Christianity—books, bibles, jewelry, and the like—are a relic of a McDonaldized faith.

10. Not that major uprisings such as the Farm Workers Rights Movement, or the disruption of the Bracero Program which displaced thousands of legal Mexican immigrant workers, did not create disruptive tones in this era. These were important too, but, in many regards, were able to remain hidden and as isolated events rather than an endemic societal and structural problem that Christians needed to be a part of.

11. For Black Americans, this was a sort of awakening for the Black social church for an exhaustive look at the contributions of the Black church during this era and how the social and protesting voice of the Black church was developed, see James E Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 1992); John Hope Franklin and Alfred A Moss Jr, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8 ed. (Boston, New York, San Francisco, St Louis: Mc Graw Hill, 2000); Franklin E Frazier and Nathan Glazer, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Alphonso Pinkney, *Black Americans*, 5 ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000); Anthony B Pinn, *Terror & Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003). I would argue that this is part of the backbone, both theologically and ideologically, of the post-industrial generation.

12. See Sally Richards, *Futurenet: The Past, Present, and Future of the Internet as Told by its Creators and Visionaries* (2002).

13. For an in depth examination, I suggest seeing Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys : a Native American Expression of the Jesus Way* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015).

14. That is, whether the scripture is true or not, tradition and culture are the primary truth source and what is deferred to as truth, *Stand Your Ground : Black Bodies and the Justice of God* (Maryknoll, New York Orbis Books, 2015), 225-26.