

Christ Episcopal Church Amidst Massive Resistance: A Theological Examination of Christian Duty

Jennifer M. McBride

Massive Resistance Through School Closings: A Narrative

In 1896, the United States Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* opinion approved the philosophy of "separate but equal," allowing the state to maintain distinct public facilities for black and white Americans provided that such facilities were equivalent in regards to funding and quality. However, by 1951, when the average black as compared to the average white school in Virginia was receiving only half of the local and state funding per child, often had too little space in inadequate buildings, while white and black teachers earned grossly disparate salaries, it had become strikingly obvious that separate schools were not at all equal and that white Southerners would never, of their own volition, attend to the black community's rights. NAACP lawyers began challenging these injustices present in the school system in the 1930's, and by the 1950's they were contesting segregation itself. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed its *Plessy* ruling and held in the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* case that "separate but equal" is inherently unequal and that segregated public education by race is unconstitutional. However, in its first decision, the court did not instruct the localities on how to implement desegregation, and a year later the Supreme Court remanded procedural decisions to the district courts, specifying that the localities must implement desegregation in the public schools "with all deliberate speed."¹

Deeming the state of Virginia as "the gateway to the South" and drawing from Civil War imagery, U.S. democratic Senator Harry Byrd warned that if the forces of integration invaded Virginia and overthrew segregation, the rest of the South would fall as well. In response to the threat, Byrd organized a resistance in the form of the Southern Manifesto, which was signed by

¹ [The Ground Beneath Our Feet: Virginia History Since the Civil War \(Massive Resistance\)](#). Dir. Shawn M. Freude. Prod. George H. Gilliam, 2000.

101 congressmen. Furthermore, in 1956 Byrd announced that “racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South” and he rallied statewide “massive resistance.” In 1956 the Virginia General Assembly, with the support of Governor Thomas B. Stanley, enacted massive resistance legislation that stated “the mixing of white and colored children in any elementary or secondary public school constitutes a clear and present danger, affecting and endangering the health and welfare of the children.” The new law instructed that a school would close immediately if integration to any degree took place.² By the summer of 1958, white Charlottesville citizens were preparing for just that, since Charlottesville, Arlington, and Newport News were under federal court orders to desegregate their schools in the fall.³

In July of 1958, State Senator and member of Charlottesville’s Christ Episcopal Church, Edward O. McCue, began to materialize his strategy to fight the Federal government’s mandate, and he vehemently advocated that the only way “to beat ‘em...is to close the public schools and substitute for them local private schools at no extra cost to anyone.”⁴ McCue was a local segregationist leader in the Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties and in a 1956 interview with *The Nation* said:

Of course we know this whole [integration] thing is being aided and abetted by the Communists and the Jews. The Communists want to mongrelize the race—weaken and conquer; and the Jews, they’re so clannish, they want it so that they will end up being the only pure white race left... We don’t want any trouble down here, but boy, you haven’t seen trouble compared to what they’ll be if integration starts.⁵

McCue was confident that Virginians would do everything in their power to impede integration, including offering state grants to parents for their children’s education when the public schools

² The Ground Beneath Our Feet: Virginia History Since the Civil War (Massive Resistance). Dir. Shawn M. Freude. Prod. George H. Gilliam, 2000.

³ “UVa President Speaks Out on Integration Issue: Says Problem Must Be Solved on Local Level.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 18 July 1958: 1.

Judge John Paul handed down the decision for Charlottesville schools on May 12, 1958.

⁴ “Must Close Schools, McCue Says: Senator Sees No Necessity for New Legislation.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 10 July 1958: 2.

⁵ Wakefield, Dan. “Charlottesville Battle: Symbol of the Divided South.” The Nation 183:11 (1956): 212-213.

closed. Since no legislation allowing public school buildings to be used for private schooling would hold up in federal courts, McCue campaigned for the use of church facilities and discovered through a survey that “plenty of space suitable for school is available in church buildings.”⁶ In fact, there were more than one hundred Sunday school classrooms in Charlottesville unused during the week compared to the one hundred and fifty white public school rooms that massive resistance laws would leave empty.⁷ And so, parent organizations began applying for charters to establish makeshift private school units.

Meanwhile, the all-white⁸ Charlottesville City School Board, which was responsible for pupil assignments,⁹ adopted an administrative program presented by City Attorney John S. Battle, Jr., designed to reduce the number of African-American applicants by requiring scholastic achievement tests for students who wanted to transfer, conducting interviews to determine the students’ motives, and redistricting the schools.¹⁰ For example, the School Board created a new district for African-American students, which enveloped the homes of at least twenty-six of the thirty-one black applicants seeking admission to Venable Elementary, significantly expanding the black Jefferson Elementary School district lines to include all but a few African-American families and to exclude all white families.¹¹ In addition, the Battle Plan had already imposed a numerical limit by demanding that the students apply for transfer in writing at least sixty days before the opening of a new school session.¹² NAACP attorneys Oliver W. Hill, Spottswood Robinson III, and S. W. Tucker, representing twenty-six of the thirty-four black children seeking

⁶ “Must Close Schools, McCue Says: Senator Sees No Necessity for New Legislation.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 10 July 1958: 2.

⁷ “Church Rooms for School Use Studied.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 12 July 1958: 3.

⁸ In 1963 Raymond Bell became the first African-American appointed to Charlottesville’s School Board. See Saunders, James Robert and Renae Nadine Shackelford. Urban Renewal and the End of Black Culture in Charlottesville, Virginia. McFarland, 1995: 16.

⁹ “City School Board Considers Assignment of 31 Negro Pupils.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 18 July 1958: 1.

¹⁰ “Private School Unit Applies for Charter.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 12 July 1958: 3.

¹¹ “20 Plaintiffs Ask Judge Paul to Invalidate City School Assignment Plan.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 1 August 1958: 1-2. And Bruns, Alan. “Charlottesville Creates a New School District.” Richmond Times Dispatch 17 July 1958.

¹² “City School Board Considers Assignment of 31 Negro Pupils.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 18 July 1958: 1.

transfer to white schools, asked the Federal district court to invalidate Charlottesville's local assignment plan.¹³ The complainants' allegations included that "the plaintiffs possess[ed] all qualifications and satisf[ied] all reasonable requirements for admissions to the schools to which they applied, save the requirements of the subsequently adopted enrollment plan."¹⁴

Federal Judge John Paul ordered the African-American students to take the school achievement tests and submit to the interviews, implying that the attorneys erred in assuming that the School Board would assess the test scores and interviews in a discriminatory manner. However, Judge Paul questioned the redistricting, saying that it resembled gerrymandering, and cautioned that he would supplant any future discriminatory procedures.¹⁵ A month later, Hill, chief Virginia counsel for the NAACP, found that the School Board rejected thirty black students due either to the newly shifted district lines or to the elimination method designed to be a Catch-22: a student was denied transfer if either her score on the board-administered classification test was below the median, hence signifying that she was unprepared to transfer, or if the child's score was above the median, indicating that the pupil was a successful student in the school she was attending, and therefore, that it was in the best interest of the child to remain at that school.¹⁶ However, June Shagaloff, social coordinator for the Legal Defense and Educational Fund Inc. of the NAACP said at an African-American citizens' workshop on desegregation that, in general, black students' scholastic achievement increases once they are enrolled in white schools due mostly to better resources and facilities. She reported, "Black students within a year have caught up with white students when placed in integrated schools. Therefore, we look forward to seeing

¹³ "Judge John Paul Sets August 11th As Date He Will Hear School Case." Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 1 Aug. 1958: 1.

¹⁴ "20 Plaintiffs Ask Judge Paul to Invalidate City School Assignment Plan." Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 1 August 1958: 1-2.

¹⁵ "Judge Paul Denies School Board Request For Invalidation of Motion By NAACP." Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 15 August 1958: 1-2.

¹⁶ "School Board Rejects Thirty Negro Pupils: Charlottesville Pupils to Protest to Judge Paul." Richmond Times Dispatch 7 Sept. 1958:1.

‘white schools’ replaced with ‘public schools’ as it should be.”¹⁷ Meanwhile, a group of local black leaders met at First Baptist Church Main Street in late July and organized an emergency Community Committee to address the struggle for school desegregation and to make public “to Charlottesville and to the nation, that the support of the entire Negro community—not just the NAACP—is behind the effort to implement the May 17, 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court.”¹⁸

That same mid-summer month, the ministers present at the Charlottesville and Albemarle Ministerial Association meeting unanimously declared that they were opposed to using church property for public schools primarily on the grounds of church and state separation. Christ Episcopal Church’s Rev. Mike Donovan did not attend and was uncommitted at the time of the meeting.¹⁹ In response to the ministerial association and to his own pastor’s indecision, State Senator McCue proclaimed, “I cannot believe that the congregations of the churches of the City of Charlottesville will close their doors to the needs of the white school children...As I see it, the personal opinion of the minister is not the determining factor.”²⁰ Drawing upon language of state’s rights, inverting victim status to apply only to the white school children, and privileging democratic principles over ecclesial authority, McCue continued:

The Virginia State school closing law is on the statute books and we are subject to it. Under the laws of the Commonwealth, there can be no integration in the schools of Virginia. I believe that the great majority of the people of Charlottesville approve of the law and expect to see it enforced. In the event that there is any attempted mixing of the races in any Charlottesville school, that school will be closed by the governor, and an attempt will be made...to reopen the school on a segregated basis. If [the governor] is unable to reopen the school, it will remain closed. There will be no integration...It is ironical that...the entire Negro school system can go undisturbed for the coming year, while a handful of Negro students will bring about the closing of one or more white schools...The first school rooms in America were provided by various churches of our

¹⁷ “Integration Forecast If Schools Close.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 19 Aug. 1958.

¹⁸ “Citizens Form Emergency Community Committee For Desegregation.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 1 Aug. 1958: 1.

¹⁹ “Ministers Oppose Using Churches as Classrooms: Church Pole Affirms Association Stand.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 16 July 1958. And “Christ Church to Make Facilities Available for Private Education.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 21 July 1958.

²⁰ “Congregations Asked for Schooling Space: Sen. McCue Seeks Available Rooms.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 18 July 1958: 15.

nation. Therefore, it is natural to turn to them for educational assistance...In shutting their doors to our children, it seems to me that certain local preachers are following the footsteps of autocratic leaders and have become imbued with the dictatorial disease of the Supreme Court of the United States. Is it not the right and duty of the people constituting the congregations to decide what use is to be made of the buildings which were paid for by them?...I feel certain that the people of our churches will do the Christian thing, the moral thing, the god-like thing, and throw wide open their Sunday school doors to the needs of the white children.²¹

It seems for McCue, the school closings were not an emergency in which to respond (which was the terminology adopted by the white community a month later), but a strategic plan thoroughly thought through that included as its main weapon the use of sacred space to fight integration and “maintain segregated schools.”²²

At high noon the day following McCue’s proclamation, a special meeting of the Christ Church Vestry was held in Rector Donovan’s private study “to determine if it would be wise, at this time, for the Vestry to make any statement, pro or con, regarding the availability of Christ Church’s space and facilities for possible school use in the event the public schools [were] closed in Charlottesville.”²³ After a two-hour conversation, in the absence of six Vestry members, and against Rev. Donovan’s urging to delay a decision until more members were present, the Vestry decided “to take action now.”²⁴ Claiming political neutrality yet utilizing language poignantly parallel to congregant Senator McCue’s—language of Christian duty, the insurmountability of state law, and the victimization of white children--the following resolution was released to the press at 10 am on July 21st:

The question of the use of Christ Church facilities for school purposes has been raised and carefully considered by the Vestry of the Church.

The Vestry is advised that the provisions of the law require that the public school facilities of Charlottesville will be closed in the event of an integration of the races in those schools. It is incontrovertible that such a closing would be damaging to our community in the highest degree, with the major burden of this course falling on our children. Yet the law is plain, and the result is equally plain.

²¹ Ibid.

²² “Must Close Schools, McCue Says: Senator Sees No Necessity for New Legislation.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 10 July 1958: 2.

²³ Christ Church Minutes, 1958-61: 15. The Vestry normally recessed in the summer.

²⁴ Ibid.

In these circumstances, it is the feeling of this Vestry that it is not only the public duty but the Christian duty of every citizen and every institution to eliminate or minimize the tragic effect upon our children of depriving them of the education which is a part of their birthright. This is so regardless of the merits or demerits of the legal issues involved.²⁵

Because the Vestry of Christ Church feels that it is a Christian duty to do so, for the reasons set out above, the facilities of this church will be made available for the continued education of the children of this community, so far as such facilities can be made available without conflict with the normal and usual functions of Christ Church.²⁶

Christ Episcopal Church was the first of six churches to go on record as willing to provide its facilities for private schools.²⁷

On September 19, 1958, Governor Lindsay Almond required the Charlottesville School Board to relinquish all authority over James Lane High School and Charles Venable Elementary School. He inaugurated the implementation of the new law by closing these schools after two African-American high school students (Olivia Ferguson, daughter of the NAACP's local chapter's president, George R. Ferguson and John Earle Martin, son of Julie Martin) as well as ten elementary school children responded to Federal District Judge John Paul's order of admission.²⁸ The NAACP statement issued over Ferguson and Martin before they enrolled for school in September said:

It is ironic to us that as American citizens we have to fight so hard through the courts to insure those rights already guaranteed by our constitution; rights that a large percentage of our fellow white citizens mistakenly assume are theirs exclusively... To do less than [enroll our children in Lane High School] would indicate that we have lost faith in the democratic principles on which our country was founded. We regret the closing of any school. However, we are not responsible for the massive resistance laws of this state. We feel that the time is past due when local governments should take charge of this school problem. If local governments would divorce themselves from state policy, the solution of this problem would be immediate.²⁹

²⁵ Underlined in the Vestry resolution.

²⁶ Christ Church Minutes, 1958-61: 16.

²⁷ "Vestry Says Church Available for Classes." Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 22 July 1958. The other churches include: First Methodist Church, The Greek Orthodox Church, First Presbyterian Church, University Baptist Church, and Belmont Baptist Church.

²⁸ "Two Negroes Will Enroll at Lane." Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 12 Sept. 1958.

²⁹ "Parents Say Negroes Still Plan to Enroll." Richmond Times Dispatch 12 Sept 1958.

A few days after Governor Almond closed the schools, eighty percent³⁰ of the 1700 displaced Lane and Venable students registered for the “Emergency Schools” conducted by the Charlottesville Educational Foundation (CEF) and the Parents Committee.³¹ Christ Church provided space for the 10th-12th grade students managed by the CEF, whose control committee member, Barry Marshall, stated to the Vestry that the CEF’s purpose was purely educational and charitable.³² The CEF “take[s] no position on the segregation vs. integration subject, and they are neither ‘for’ nor ‘against’ the state’s massive resistance program,” records Christ Church’s minutes.³³ However, regardless of their claim of independence from such municipal and state procedures, the makeshift private schools were tax supported, retained regular Lane and Venable teachers who remained paid by the city, and used the school system’s textbooks while the public schools were closed. Charlottesville Mayor Thomas Michie claimed that the School Board was merely honoring the teachers’ contracts, and that the teachers were free to volunteer their services without any obligation to the Board.³⁴ The public school teachers, however, held to a more realistic view of the circumstances. Their expressed primary interest was to keep in good standing with the School Board and to remain under the current retirement plan.³⁵ The Federal Court deemed the city’s action evasive, and in mid-October Federal Judge John Paul, describing the private schools as public schools merely shifted to other buildings, forbade teachers on the city payroll to work for the segregated makeshift private schools unless they integrated.³⁶

That same month Oliver Hill filed a motion to challenge the state’s school closing law in the U.S. District Court in Harrisonburg on behalf of the twelve black students ordered by the Federal court to enroll, yet denied admission, to Lane and Venable. The plaintiffs’ motion was

³⁰ “Sixteen Percent of Lane Students in Other Schools.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 23 Dec. 1958: 1. About 16% of the students went to school outside of the city while 4% were unaccounted for.

³¹ “Lane Seniors Register For Emergency Schools.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 23 Sept. 1958.

³² “Sixteen Percent of Lane Students in Other Schools.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 23 Dec. 1958: 1.

³³ Christ Church Minutes, 1958-61, p 21.

³⁴ Burns, Alan. “Lane Students Start Classes.” Richmond Times Dispatch 30 Sept. 1958: 6.

³⁵ “Benefit Retention Assured Teachers in School Switch.” Daily Progress (Charlottesville) 8 Aug. 1958.

³⁶ “Judge Paul Deals Blow To City’s Makeshift School Plan.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 10 Oct. 1958, 1.

directed towards the Charlottesville School Board for violating the black students' constitutional rights. The School Board, which under state law no longer controlled the two schools, saw itself as powerless to open them. On January 19, 1959 the State Supreme Court and a three-judge Federal Court ruled that Virginia's massive resistance laws were "patently unconstitutional" in that they violated the fourteenth amendment of the U.S. constitution and that Virginia must operate the public school system in its entirety.³⁷ The School Board, now held liable for contempt of court proceedings if it delayed the reopening of the two closed schools, asked for a stay regarding integration until the following September. The court granted the postponement, requiring the School Board to submit a revised pupil assignment plan within twenty days.³⁸ The following week, on February 4, 1959 Lane and Venable schools reopened on a segregated basis.³⁹

Christian Duty

Given such a narrative, what are we to make of the Christ Church Vestry's controlling notion, and congregant State Senator McCue's statements, regarding Christian duty? Situated within the massive resistance agenda, Senator McCue's language of the Charlottesville churches' "god-like" duty seems to be nothing more than mere religious rhetoric used for segregationist political ends, while the Christ Church Vestry's decision to perform what it deemed its Christian duty seems to hold more validity. The Vestry resolution grounds its resolve to provide schooling space for the displaced children in three interrelated assertions: the massive resistance laws consequent school closings would most damage the community's children who are the least responsible; the church's best, and perhaps only, way to be a constructive agent in the midst of political battle and fixed state law would be to alleviate the effects on the children; and such

³⁷ "Governor Almond Asks Citizens Not To Yield To Judicial Tyranny." Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 23 Jan. 1959, 1.

³⁸ "City School Board Says It Will Reopen At 'Early Date.'" Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 30 Jan. 1959, 1.

³⁹ "Lane High and Venable Elem. Schools Reopened Wednesday." Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune 6 Feb. 1959, 1.

action remains neutral to the existing political and legal issues. The question left before us is whether this explanation of Christian duty holds up theologically amidst such circumstances?

In his Ethics, Dietrich Bonhoeffer sets up a dichotomy between duty and free responsibility. Writing in the early 1940's, he observes that "our period...is oppressed by a superabounding reality of concrete ethical problems."⁴⁰ The sheer weight of "the overwhelming forces of inescapable situations which demand decisions" leaves one grasping for that which would defer a personal accounting before God.⁴¹ "It looks as though the way out from the confusing multiplicity of possible decisions is the path of duty...But in this confinement within the limits of duty there can never come the bold stroke of deed which is done in one's own free responsibility, the only kind of deed which can strike at the heart of evil and overcome it," writes Bonhoeffer.⁴² When applied to Charlottesville, VA in 1958, Bonhoeffer's "heart of evil" refers to the sin of segregation. Martin Luther King Jr. perhaps speaks most clearly about segregation's serious theological implications when he says in his sermon, "Paul's Letter to American Christians," that "segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we all have in Christ" and when he writes from a Birmingham city jail, "Segregation is not only politically, economically, and sociologically unsound, but it is also morally wrong and sinful...Isn't segregation an existential expression of man's tragic separation, an expression of his awful estrangement, his terrible sinfulness?"⁴³ Bonhoeffer's explanation continues, "The man of duty will end by having to fulfill his obligation even to the devil."⁴⁴

Bonhoeffer's shocking discourse intends to caution the moral theorist, who tends towards duty, against a certain evil to which he is particularly susceptible, one that arrives in various

⁴⁰ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Ethics. New York: Touchstone, 1995. p. 66.

⁴¹ Ibid. 68.

⁴² Ibid. 68-9.

⁴³ King, Martin Luther. "Paul's Letter to American Christians." The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr. Volume III: Birth of a New Age, December 1955-December 1956. Ed. Clayborne Carson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. p. 418.

King, Martin Luther. "Letter From Birmingham City Jail." A Testament of Hope. Ed. James M. Washington. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991. p. 293-94.

⁴⁴ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. Ethics. New York: Touchstone, 1995. p. 69.

respectable and seductive disguises.⁴⁵ The evil that appears as an ethical possibility comes “in the form of light, beneficence, loyalty, [and] conforms with historical necessity.”⁴⁶ However, the ethical principles to which duty responds offer only immediate and partial solutions to problems disparate and alienated from one another. The sum of ethical decisions as Bonhoeffer so describes cannot transform into a seamless “flow of life;” for, the divine metanarrative is unintelligible to the ethical’s narrow claim.⁴⁷ In other words, while the dutiful individual defers personal responsibility by functioning merely as executor of a prescribed principle, that ethical order to which he attends never encapsulates the commandment of God who alone sustains the whole of life and to whom the Church should bend its ear.⁴⁸ God’s commandment is always His will in Jesus Christ, communicated “in concrete speech *to* somebody” as opposed in impersonal speech *about* a principle.⁴⁹

Certainly God’s commandment does not have to exclude the moral; in fact, it is the only validation for it.⁵⁰ Yet, ethically-driven duty alone links itself with reason in such a way that stifles the confident courage needed to contend with “the unreasonableness of the world.”⁵¹ Judge J. Harry Micheal, then a member of the Charlottesville School Board and also the leading moderate on Christ Church’s Vestry, describes the unreasonableness substantiated in Virginia: “The massive resistance business of old Harry Byrd was nonsense in the first order and everybody in creation who knew anything about the law knew it was nonsense, but he road it through the General Assembly just the same.”⁵²

Although there is neither known memories of any intra-church discussions involving the unjust plight of the African-American community nor a record of Christ Church members

⁴⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 67.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 278.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 280.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 275.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 272.

⁵¹ Ibid., 67.

⁵² Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

speaking out against the Vestry decision for any reason other than the principle of church-state separation, certainly we may suppose that concerns varying from the Vestry's stated perspective existed within the church to some degree.⁵³ Bonhoeffer explains such possible silence and stagnation as a dependence on ethic's reasonableness that deems ineffectual the effort necessary to progress against society's unreasonableness. Judge Micheal says, "The City Council was the voice of the community and if it chose to act, fine, but if it chose not to there wasn't much that the community could do about it. Certainly the School Board had no authority at all to influence things."⁵⁴ Bowing to what King calls "the myth of time,"⁵⁵ Judge Micheal continues, "I think that it was obvious to anyone who had sense enough to tie his shoes that this was going to straighten itself out. And it basically did when Lindsey Almond backed down. It slowly dawned on those oligarchs in the General Assembly that massive resistance stopped working in the Civil War."⁵⁶ Of course, the School Board finally did hold the power. And when the NAACP sued the Charlottesville School Board, Judge Micheal remembers City Attorney Battle instructing him and the rest of the Board to pack an overnight kit and pajamas before heading to Judge Paul's courtroom in Harrisonburg, implying that they may be put in jail for contempt of federal court for not reopening the schools. "Because," says Judge Micheal, "we were the ones who had the power to operate the school system."⁵⁷ Bonhoeffer's description of people bound by duty "withdraw[ing] from the scene or yield[ing] unresistingly to the stronger party" is apropos.⁵⁸ Within this passivity, reasonable people fail to apprehend sin's profundity and consequence.⁵⁹

In contrast, Bonhoeffer's conception of free responsibility, lived within the will of God, is characterized by boldness and risk. The will of God is uncertain in the sense that it cannot be

⁵³ Page 20 of the Vestry Minutes acknowledges receipt from parish member Dr. Richard W. Hudgins regarding the Vestry action. However, there is no mention of what the letter said.

⁵⁴ Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

⁵⁵ King, 295.

⁵⁶ Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer, 68.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 67.

reduced to human ethical alternatives, nor to reason, utility, or practicality. And as Judge Micheal says in the context of 1958 Charlottesville, “Nothing--nothing upsets people more than uncertainty.”⁶⁰ Bonhoeffer makes clear that obedience divorced from freedom yields only a Kantian ethic of duty, and Kierkegaard, in *Fear and Trembling*, explores the limitations of a Kantian utilitarianism when faced with the God who tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son, born from a post-menopausal woman and from whom is promised many nations.⁶¹ Kierkegaard shows that God’s will often lacks the reasonableness and assuredness that duty seems to provide.

Furthermore, within the freely responsible act there is no postponement of accountability, and the action may lead to a bad conscience given the multifaceted and complex character of worldly circumstance.⁶² Still, such a bad conscience may be “healthier and stronger than a conscience which is deceived,” if one succumbs to the bad to evade the worse.⁶³ Hence, the Charlottesville church that refuses access to its facilities may carry the burden of denying the Lane and Venable children space for learning, but it would not bear the guilt of rejecting the cause of its neighbor, the black community. Bonhoeffer commends Nietzsche’s interpretation of the divine commandment to love one’s neighbor as commensurate with the New Testament’s meaning when he says, “My brothers, I do not counsel you to love your neighbor; I counsel you to love him who is farthest from you.”⁶⁴ The one at the margins, the one “who is extremely remote from me” is the neighbor; otherwise love of neighbor is nothing but a fruitless love of self.⁶⁵ By loving only the neighbor who is like the self, an individual “takes refuge from the free and open space of responsibility in the comforting confinement of the fulfillment of duty,” says Bonhoeffer.⁶⁶ The church that is only concerned with the damage that falls upon “our

⁶⁰ Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

⁶¹ See Genesis 17.

⁶² Bonhoeffer, 68.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 256.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 255.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

community” and “*our* children” is not living out the “total response of a whole man to the whole of reality” which defines free responsibility and the call of God’s command.⁶⁷

As previously mentioned, by free responsibility Bonhoeffer means living by the will of God, which arises anew every moment with situational particularity, and which demands and presupposes personal intimacy with the Father through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, free responsibility involves simplicity, the single-minded obedience⁶⁸ resulting from fixing “one’s eyes solely on the simple truth of God at a time when all concepts are being confused, distorted, and turned up-side down.”⁶⁹ The singular gaze allows one to look at the world more honestly and completely, and from it arises wisdom. “The wise man is the one who sees reality as it is and who sees into the depth of things.”⁷⁰ In other words, the wise individual knows that reality in its essence cannot be helped by “the purest of principles or even by the best of [human] wills, but only by the living God.”⁷¹ But if simplicity gazes upon God and wisdom upon the world, the only way to unify the two is by beholding Christ, the reconciler of God and world. The will of God is set, then, towards reconciliation through “the lived love of Jesus Christ.”⁷² And any action straying from this *telos* cannot be named Christian.

Given this definitive end of reconciliation, the Christ Church Vestry’s claim of neutrality regarding Charlottesville’s socio-political and legal realities cannot be justified in the name of Christian responsibility. The Episcopal Book of Common Prayer’s confession of sin acknowledges that neutrality has no place in the Christian communal life when it leads the congregation to confess, “We have left undone those things which we ought to have done and done those things which we ought not to have done.”⁷³ Although Christ Church’s lending of

⁶⁷ Ibid 254.

⁶⁸ See Bonhoeffer’s *Cost of Discipleship*, chapter 3.

⁶⁹ Bonhoeffer, 70.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 71.

⁷² Ibid., 72.

⁷³ See the 1928 Book of Common Prayer, Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer.

space for the private schools⁷⁴ was a public act involving a degree of social engagement, it maintained a certain neutrality that Bonhoeffer calls “private virtuousness”:

Within the limits of [its] powers, [it] does good. But in [its] voluntary renunciation of [political involvement], [it] knows how to remain punctiliously within the permitted bounds which preserve [it] from involvement in conflict. [It] must be blind and deaf to the wrongs that surround [it]. It is only at the price of self-deception that [it] can safeguard [its] private blamelessness against contamination through responsible action in the world.⁷⁵

When applied to the Church, Bonhoeffer distinguishes between its apparent limits of power and the boundaries of responsibility inherent in the will of God. Divine grace finds the Church in its particular *locus* and historicity and “lays claim” on its individual members.⁷⁶ The divine call on one’s life becomes one’s responsibility, which has boundaries in that the call occurs in temporality and in one’s particular place, but it also escapes all limits, breaking through racial communities and societal mindsets, for example. The free individual bound to a divine will set against sin and towards reconciliation discards neutrality and moderation--the barren “*via media*”--for what King calls an extremism of love and justice and Bonhoeffer, a “fruitful radicalism.”⁷⁷

What is most ironic about Christ Church’s interest in fulfilling its Christian duty is that there is no record of, no sermon preached, no present parishioner who can articulate how the essence of its duty was indeed particularly Christian. Furthermore, both the Vestry resolution and the congregants who were present in 1958 fervently claim the church’s action to be politically neutral, yet only understand it in terms of citizenship duty amidst socio-political realities. Judge Micheal says that Christ Church’s response to the school closings “did not really engage my religious feelings. It certainly engaged my civic feelings, especially regarding the desirability of

⁷⁴ Christ Church did indeed *lend* its facilities. The Vestry decided not to charge the CEF for their use of the church.

⁷⁵ Bonhoeffer, 69.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 69; King, 298.

education and the continuation of it.”⁷⁸ Judge Micheal firmly believed that Christ Church should lend its facilities as a temporary measure. “I’m very strong on this,” says Micheal, “the utilization of the church let the children of those two schools make normal progress towards their graduation.”⁷⁹ In a letter to parishioner Estelle Echols, Micheals wrote in 1985:

I recall with vividness that I was one of the principle spokesmen in the Vestry for bringing about permission to use the rooms at Christ Church for the school, while George Coles was rather strongly opposed to doing so. That issue boiled for quite a while, and finally it came to pass that we recognized that we had an obligation to the community and to the Commonwealth to do what we could to ameliorate the awful impasse into which things had come. I’m glad we did it.⁸⁰

Hence, Micheal’s felt responsibility for the situation in Charlottesville centered on his identity as a School Board member, and because the black schools “went on in a normal fashion,” Judge Micheal saw no reason to be concerned about the African-America students.⁸¹ The Board was operating from a practical, not a political viewpoint, he stresses.

Micheal’s moderate stance at the Vestry meeting was diametrically opposed to that of the church’s conservative leader, Judge George Coles. Coles, also detached from concern over the action’s essentially Christian character, dissented from the Vestry’s majority opinion on the constitutional and legal grounds of church-state separation. A year later when integration did in fact occur, Coles partnered with the Charlottesville Educational Foundation by playing an influential role in establishing the CEF’s alternative, all-white Robert E. Lee Elementary School and Rock Hill Academy.⁸² Similar to the makeshift private schools, these two academies accepted as their primary means for operation state subsidies granted to the parents and equivalent in cost to sending a child to public school. Moreover, through Coles’ and other Christ Church congregants’ intimate involvement with these racially segregated schools, Christ Church hosted both classes, otherwise delayed for three weeks in the Fall of 1959 as construction on the

⁷⁸ Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Church Archives, letter dated July 22, 1985.

⁸¹ Personal Interview with Judge J. Harry Micheal, October 23, 2002.

⁸² Mason, Tom. Christ Church: A History, 1820-2000, 2000.

new campus culminated, and the Spring graduation ceremonies for several years following.⁸³ If Charlottesville's general public perceived Christ Church's participation with the CEF in the Fall of 1958 as purely practical, that image was shattered by the Fall of 1959 when Judge Coles and other distinguished Christ Church members undertook the implementation of this anti-integration effort.⁸⁴

Parishioners like Phillip Marshall,⁸⁵ who had neither an official leadership role in church affairs (and therefore remained aloof from central discussions) nor a vested interest as a parent of a student, trusted the Vestry's decision-making power. Baptized in Christ Church seventy-four years ago, lifelong member Phillip Marshall says that if he had been on the 1958 Vestry "he would have given one hundred percent support to utilizing church facilities for the makeshift schools."⁸⁶ He vaguely states, "For one reason or another I would have felt, like the Vestry said, that it was our Christian duty."⁸⁷ Although he cannot specify his reasons, they certainly matter when theologically examining this narrative, and Marshall, like the Vestry, offers no theological or biblical position. When asked the role his Christian faith played in his convictions about the makeshift schools, he responds that it is a good question without a good answer. However, when asked what the Church's function in society is, he goes to his refrigerator door and plucks down the Christ Church mission statement: "Forming Christians in order that they might serve Christ in the world." "That's what the church is there for," he adds.⁸⁸ Yet King expresses profound disappointment with the white church during the Civil Rights era for neglecting to do just that:

The contemporary church is often a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. It is so often the arch-supporter of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent and often vocal sanction of things as they are. But the judgment of God is on the church as never before. If the church of today does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of

⁸³ Mason, 34. Also, Rock Hill Academy's Hill Topics Newspaper. Vol. 1:1, November 6, 1959.

⁸⁴ Personal Interview with Teresa Price, November 12, 2002.

⁸⁵ Name changed by request. Personal Interview, October 16, 2002.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

the early church, it will lose its authentic ring...and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century.⁸⁹

Looking back, Marshall does not think that Christ Church should have done anything different in 1958. He says, “What else could you do in those times? We did about as much as we could, given the congregation that we had. If we had done any more it would have caused trouble, like splits in the church.” While there is certainly no reason to argue with Marshall’s assessment of the 1958 congregation, we should question his appeal to powerlessness. King reminds us that against great odds the early church displayed the power of the Spirit through a willingness to suffer—perhaps even to suffer “trouble” and “splits.” “In those days,” says King, “the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society.”⁹⁰

Marshall, who “did not oppose integration as such but disagreed with the manner in which the federal government was forcing the schools to implement it,” describes the movement to integrate Lane High School in 1958 as feeling like a bomb had been dropped.⁹¹ Of course, in reality, there were two high school children seeking enrollment. In contrast, Rick Richmond, who was fourteen and was suppose to enter the ninth grade at Lane but instead attended CEF’s classes at First Presbyterian Church, remembers thinking, “My God, we are talking about two people who want to come to Lane, and we are shutting down the whole school because of it? I couldn’t believe it--for two people, *two people*. How absurd.”⁹²

Seemingly with such absurdity in mind, King wrote, “I have longed to hear white ministers say, ‘Follow this decree because integration is morally *right* and the Negro is your

⁸⁹ King, 300.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Implying a connection between Christ Church’s 1958 action and today’s church culture, Marshall said, “I regret now that we don’t have more African-American participation. Once in a while we have a black family show up a few Sundays and then they are gone and don’t come back. I have made it my point to make sure that they are welcome. One black couple came and I thought that they were going to stay, but after about a month, I couldn’t get them back. [The husband] told me, ‘Phillip, it’s just not friendly,’ and yet I don’t think we are that unfriendly.”

⁹² Personal Interview with Rick Richmond, October 23, 2002.

brother.”⁹³ Christ Episcopal Church’s Rector, Mike Donovan, who came to the Church in 1939 after serving as a missionary in Liberia, West Africa and who was much beloved in town, had worked towards race relations in Charlottesville, particularly by helping integrate the ministerial association in the late 40’s to early 50’s. When the white ministerial association asked Christ Church to host a meeting, Donovan consented but demanded that it be integrated. However, when it came to the injustices present in the African-American schools leading up to the 1958 school integration crisis, Donovan was a gradualist.⁹⁴ He was criticized by some of his friends and lost the respect of his black clergy colleagues who had previously looked up to him when Christ Church announced its participation in the makeshift private schools.⁹⁵ And according to his son, Bishop Herbert Donovan, Rev. Donovan found that the middle ground was hard to stand on—he was not a segregationist but felt that those at the forefront of the integration movement were pressing too hard—and his then recently ordained son remembers experiencing pain over his father substituting a previous activism for King’s “obnoxious negative peace”—a peace that maintained his effectiveness with the church’s conservative members and that caused no rupture in his pastoral relations (which, as Bishop Donovan states, is always an issue with political matters). One such close personal pastoral relationship was with State Senator McCue, who although not very active, became a member through the church’s men’s club. According to Bishop Donovan, the church was good for McCue as was his relationship with the rector who had a renowned pastoral ability to comfort the troubled.⁹⁶ One wonders what kind of concrete spiritual direction he spoke to McCue.

⁹³ King 299.

⁹⁴ Phone interview with Bishop Herbert Donovan, October 16, 2002.

Writing to white clergy like Donovan, King says, “I have been gravely disappointed by the white moderate...who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says, ‘I agree with you in the goal you seek but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action;’ who paternalistically feels that he can set the timetable for another man’s freedom” (295).

⁹⁵ Phone interview with Bishop Herbert Donovan, October 16, 2002.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

According to Christ Church member Rick Richmond, Mike Donovan was a significant and dominant figure in the community; “he wasn’t *just* the rector of Christ Church.”⁹⁷ Richmond believes, given the rector’s and many parishioners’ influential positions in Charlottesville, that Christ Church could have played an important role in establishing desegregation. “However, had Donovan taken a stand supporting it, he would not have had much of a church to lead, given the extremely conservative congregation comprised of many parishioners who attended because it was the proper thing to do,” says Richmond.⁹⁸ Yet Rev. Donovan was hesitant to involve the church in politics, and he was even leery of resolutions made at denominational conventions.⁹⁹ However, as pastor of the church, he experienced the tension resulting from the knowledge that his parishioners were absorbed within the subject of church facility use in order to dodge the larger question of integration, or as Bonhoeffer describes, to preserve themselves from involvement in a more substantial conflict.¹⁰⁰ He was confident that integration would occur and was committed to being a peaceful presence at the schools when it did happen, but according to his son and other members, he made “very, very few--if any--references to the issue of desegregation in his sermons,” with the exception of one Sunday when he abstractly encouraged understanding among blacks and whites.¹⁰¹ Moreover, when the time came to make a final decision about the availability of Christ Church’s space for the private schools, Rev. Donovan left the Vestry meeting, believing that since the Virginia diocese held that church property was under the governance of the Vestry, not the clergy, he should not influence the decision either way. According to his son, this gave Donovan “a way out.”¹⁰²

While Donovan wanted a way out, Rev. Henry B. Mitchell, rector of the African-American Trinity Episcopal Church, quickly found a way in. Rev. Mitchell and his wife

⁹⁷ Personal interview with Rick Richmond, October 23, 2002.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Phone Interview with Bishop Donovan, October 16, 2002.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Gertrude moved to Charlottesville in the heat of the August 1958 massive resistance uncertainty. The Trinity Episcopal congregation, who had long been involved in community uplift and race relations work, embraced them, and Mitchell instantaneously became a respected spokesperson for Charlottesville's black community.¹⁰³ At the Episcopal committee meetings in Richmond, for example, Mitchell educated the priests about the realities of segregation and he kept that teaching role a priority in his ministry his entire life because, according to his wife, "white priests just didn't know how blacks felt."¹⁰⁴ The Mitchells also immediately began participating in the desegregation efforts by entering their seventh grade son as a litigant in the NAACP's suit against the City School Board. When the parents of the litigants removed their children from the black schools that fall as a symbol of their resolve to integrate, Rev. Mitchell, who was a former school teacher, taught his son and the Senior Warden's daughter (also a plaintiff) around their kitchen table while using the Burley High School curriculum.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, in contrast to Christ Church's rector, Rev. Mitchell specifically addressed in his sermons the concerns of the community and articulated the biblical and theological ground for fighting the injustices and establishing "harmony."¹⁰⁶ In his sermon on September 14, 1958, which was printed in full the following week in the African-American Charlottesville-Albermarle Tribune, Rev. Mitchell uses the term *harmony* to speak about reconciliation. Like Bonhoeffer, his theological understanding of reconciliation revolves around the tropes of divine will, responsibility towards the neighbor, confident action, and most importantly, the necessity of Christ, and like King, around the sin of segregation, the willingness to sacrifice and suffer, and the disgrace of the white church. Moreover, Mitchell directly challenges Christ Church's claim of Christian duty:

¹⁰³ 80th Anniversary Booklet, *Rejoicing in Trinity's Journey*, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Phone interview with Gertrude Mitchell, October 30, 2002.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Mitchell, Henry B. "A Need of Faith in Our Times." Charlottesville-Albermarle Tribune, 19 Sept. 1958. p. 2.

We are cut off from the source of our being—God; and the only way we can get back is through Christ. Perhaps this might sound easy, and certainly for those who would suppress their brothers, it might seem particularly easy. But we cannot come to Christ on our own terms; we must accept him on his terms. If we do this then here in lies the solution to our disharmony. Our terms are always distorted, tainted... Certainly those who would use the church to circumvent the laws of the nation are attempting to accept Christ on their own terms.

I saw the following in our local paper a few days ago—“We feel certain of getting a favorable and spontaneous response, as all church members become keenly aware of their Christian responsibilities to the displaced children from the schools that are forced to close.” It is indeed ironical that the churches in our city have been appealed to under the guise of Christian responsibility. To appeal to that institution that is the basis of all Christian belief, and indeed is the very Body of Christ, whose doctrine is based on the firm belief in the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man—to use the church as an attempt to perpetuate the evil that has existed too long, --is blasphemous and a travesty upon the righteousness of God.

In the end all this subterfuge will be swept away and the church will be able to fulfill its God-given mission for which she was ordained—to lead men to Christ, who makes no distinction but opens his arms to all who would seek his grace. [Jesus] made ...quite clear who his mother and brothers and sisters were—“anyone who does the will of God.” And he made it even clearer in the story of the Good Samaritan—“My neighbor is anyone who is in need.” There is no getting around this...And according to St. John: “If anyone says he loves God and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen”...The love of God is tied up inseparably with the love of neighbor because Christ loves him. Anything different, whatever else it might be, certainly isn't Christian.¹⁰⁷

Upholding her husband's thick theological discourse and stating the predominant perspective in the black community, Gertrude Mitchell regards Christ Church's action of lending school space as a participation in massive resistance. She says, “Christ Church professed to be a Christian teaching institution. It is horrible to think that a church was not trying to bridge the [racial] gap but in fact was actually widening it. A church professing to do the work of the Lord should have also been thinking about blacks. What Christ Church did was flat unchristian. That's all I can say.”¹⁰⁸

Trinity Episcopal parishioner Teresa Price describes the church in which she grew up as small, thriving, receptive and always active in community affairs. Price was a teacher at the

¹⁰⁷ Mitchell, Henry B. “A Need of Faith in Our Times.” Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune, 19 Sept. 1958. p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Phone interview with Gertrude Mitchell, October 30, 2002.

African-American Burley High School until she was chosen in the sixties to be one of the two black teachers to transfer to Lane and help the integration process. In the fifties Price was also a member of Charlottesville's recently established Human Relations Council, an interracial group of citizens who mostly met at First Baptist Church Main Street "to bring about some togetherness between blacks and whites."¹⁰⁹ The council's purpose was to find jobs, housing and education for Charlottesville's citizens, and through her involvement with the Human Relations Council, she was able to break down social barriers for her high school students. Price says, "But, of course, we also developed real friendships within the group. We ate together and talked about things besides how bad race relations were."¹¹⁰

Price understands that many Christ Church members probably did not think that they were participating in massive resistance by opening up their church space to the private schools. She says:

I am sure that they thought they were doing a helpful thing; all of their children were locked out of schools so they were trying to be of service. But I don't see how you could call it anything but participating in massive resistance and preventing school integration. It looks like they were hoping that there wouldn't be a mixing of students, because they really joined hands with Rock Hill Academy to provide a segregated education for white students in 1959.¹¹¹

Price continues into the present:

Our pastor now is trying to reconcile Trinity and Christ Church, and Christ Church's rector seems to be an all-inclusive person. Times have changed. Now with folks in my generation, because we were separated, I still have a difficult time going to Christ Church and feeling any warmth, and I feel the same way about University Baptist Church. Young people are going now and feeling at home. But because I remember when I couldn't go, I don't want to go now. It is hard to get rid of those deep seeded experiences. That's unfortunate. I try to go to Christ Church for some things but there are still folks there that feel the same way; they don't want me to come. 'You have your church, go over there.' But I guess that's why Trinity has always had all kinds of people in it, because people want to love one another. That's what keeps us going.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview with Teresa Price, November 12, 2002.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

Geneva Anderson, a Trinity parishioner since 1942 and then the executive secretary of the Charlottesville branch of the NAACP, portrays her involvement in the Civil Rights era simultaneously as a member of Trinity and the NAACP as the most exciting time in her life. She describes the battle to desegregate the public schools as central to establishing black equality, given that equal jobs necessitate equal education. With ironic laughter in her voice, Anderson underscores the obvious nature of the injustices: “I don’t even think that I would have to have a Christian faith to feel the way I did, really. I believe in God and I know that He was with us, but I don’t think that anyone would need a Christian faith to feel that the segregation and the degradation that blacks had to go through was wrong. But we did an awful lot of praying and God was with us. We had God on our side so we weren’t afraid.”¹¹³ With God on their side, Anderson believes that Christ Church should have been, too. “They should have been out in the field helping us and not insulted us by opening up the church to the white children,” she says.¹¹⁴ For Anderson, the already tenuous relationship with Christ Church severed after they joined with the CEF’s makeshift private schools. She expresses feelings similar to Teresa Price’s:

I always have a very sick feeling when I go to Christ Church because it is hard to forget what that church did to us. We were both supposed to be Christians and even Episcopalians. Rev. Donovan had performed services at our church, yet he was still on the other side. It was very hurtful and I don’t think any of us have felt close to Christ Church since really. I have attended some things down there, but I just still get a funny feeling when I go.¹¹⁵

Anderson makes a sharp contrast between Christ Church and Trinity Episcopal, but she, like King, is just as disappointed and confused by the white moderate. She wrote in her 1958 journal, “Moderates are sympathetic to our cause. They say that integration is going to happen *but*.” “But,” Anderson explains forty-four years later, “they are not ready and some don’t think it needs to happen any time soon.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Personal interview with Geneva Anderson, November 16, 2002.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Geneva Anderson, along with Rev. Mitchell and other black activists, became close friends with an unexpected ally, Sarah Patton Boyle, who was born and bred in a southern aristocratic home and was the granddaughter of distinguished Confederate leaders (one grandfather was Robert E. Lee's personal scout and the other, a colonel under Stonewall Jackson).¹¹⁷ This wife of a University of Virginia faculty member and parishioner of St. Paul's Episcopal also came from a lineage of Episcopal priests. Although St. Paul's was known as the mostly moderate Episcopal congregation in town and Christ Church, the mostly conservative, Boyle apparently found little to no solace from any of her fellow white Episcopalians. She quickly became an outcast in high-society Charlottesville as she began speaking against segregation in editorials and published essays, and a few times she became a target for violent aims. Yet with a boldness absent in Christ Church's conception of Christian duty, Boyle theologically articulated her position on integration. While Christ Church's duty only perpetuated segregation both in the Spring semester following the Fall 1958 crisis and also in its embodiment as Rock Hill Academy a year later, Boyle's freely responsible words and resolve to act defied sin's seeming inevitability and triumph. She recounts how she overcame the weariness and desolation that tempted her towards despair:

When the smell, taste, sound and touch of evil are a nightmare against which you cannot struggle, the personification of evil is an intelligent device. In facing evil squarely and calling it the Devil, some of your horrid helplessness before its magnitude departs. Then, too, you find yourself more able to be dazzled into spontaneous worship by the glory of evil's opposite, the shining purity of love...Against a background of accusing enemies and silent friends, I hungrily reclaim the "morbid" doctrine that unearned suffering is redemptive, and that only the patient pain of the innocent can dissolve some human sins...The early Christians went singing to ugly deaths. The Southern crusader, too, has need of forgotten virile Christian truths.

So I shan't break down, and I shan't retire. For I shall refresh myself by looking at a sparkling, ethereal, King, and I shall know an easier yoke and a lighter burden, and I shall

¹¹⁷ Wakefield, Dan. "Charlottesville Battle: Symbol of the Divided South." The Nation 183:11 (1956): 211.

learn to say, “Father forgive them,”—and—after taking practiced, careful aim—I shall spit in the Devil’s eye.¹¹⁸

On August 8, 1958 the African-American Charlottesville-Albermarle Tribune in conjunction with the black Citizens Committee committed to do just that through prayer. The Tribune printed the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer’s collect for social justice, which highlights Bonhoeffer’s bold deed of free responsibility necessary to overcome evil:

Almighty God, who has created man in thine own image; Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil, and to make no peace with oppression; and that we may reverently use our freedom, help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice among men and nations, to the glory of thy holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.¹¹⁹

This prayer endures into the twenty-first century.

¹¹⁸ Boyle, Sarah Patton, “Spit in the Devils Eye: A Southern Heretic Speaks.” The Nation. 183:16 (1956) 327-329.

¹¹⁹ “A Prayer for Social Justice.” Charlottesville-Albermarle Tribune. 8 Aug. 1958. p. 2.

