The double brackets indicate sections we could consider removing. I've trimmed up the sentences in general, but want your go ahead before making more sizeable cuts.

Ethan Goodnight 0:00
Hello and welcome, Professor Evans! So happy to be talking with you about your current work this morning. Your current project forthcoming from Oxford is entitled, *A Theology of Brotherhood: The Federal Council of Churches and the Problem of Race*. Can you share a bit about what the FCC is, and what it is about race and the FCC that seized your attention and compelled you to develop this project into a book?

Curtis Evans 0:42
Yeah, so the FCC, it stands for Federal Council of Churches in Christ. This is an organization that was founded in 1908, they met in Philadelphia, and their primary concern was twofold. One was to address the problem of labor inequality. I mean, they were really concerned about the growing power of corporations in American life, thinking about having fair labor for laborers, in terms of wages, and so on. But primarily, they were having what was called a Labor Sunday, to sort of celebrate the labor of workers in American society. I think the other purpose for which they formed was to try to utilize the collective strength of churches. [[I mean, they felt like there was just too much denominational division. And they also had a kind of theological argument that there should be some unity in the church as the body of Christ. And so how do they how would churches bring together rather than sort of duplicating their own work for social and, and other purposes in American society?]] So I became interested in part because I had heard about their annual race relations Sundays. I learned later that in some ways this was similar to Labor Sunday in the sense that it was once a year. This was a way in which the FCC said that our modern day issues of race, labor, and so on, need to have a place on the Christian calendar, as a kind of yearly or annual reminder to Christians of their significance. [[I think was also a way of them trying to make a claim that you may think about or talk about these issues as "secular issues," but they are very much a part of Christian life. And so by putting them on the calendar, it was rendering a kind of sacred quality to these issues.]] So, I became interested in what was called at the time the Commission on Negro Churches and Race Relations and eventually became called just the Department of Race Relations, which was formed in 1923. And I trace the various programs that the FCC engaged in from 1923 to 1950, when the FCC was incorporated into the National Council of Churches [[another scholar has actually written about the National Council of races. So I feel like that work has actually been done.]] And so I would say there are two primary things that I'm interested in. One is, how did the Department of race relations in the Federal Council of Churches understand race, from the 20s, to the 50s, prior to the emergence of the civil rights movement? [[and especially this ecumenical organization, which represented when it started 33 American Christian denomination that were part of the three or four major African American denomination, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Baptist, and so on?]] And then secondly, I'm trying

to understand what their concrete projects were: race relations Sunday, anti-lynching campaigns, interracial clinics or workshops that started in the 1940s. But there was just a massive dissemination of information to American churches to try to undermine or at least challenge the dominant scientific and theological racism that existed in the early 20th century.

Ethan Goodnight 4:22
You mentioned undermining the dominant racial paradigms that existed, and I'd love to hear more about how the FCC engaged with theologies defending segregation. How did they counter those theologies with what you've titled a theology of brotherhood?

Curtis Evans 4:43
The dominant view, especially in southern churches, involved utilizing the Bible and their theological views to assert that there was a theological basis for segregation. God created the races, white and black were distinct, and that this was kind of appealing to the Genesis narrative and various other passages. [[In fact, we were talking about this recently. But even the passage that was utilized by abolitionists, acts 17, for example, about all God created, all nations have one blood segregationists read this, the remaining passage about their distinct locations are that this was an argument for segregation. I don't remember the precise wording of that scripture. But it was one a different way of reading scripture than the dominant paradigm in Southern churches.]] Now, I should admit here that even though a number of Northern churches were not in agreement with the southern way of reading scripture, on the ground, their churches were just as segregated as white Southern churches were. So from a practical level, there wasn't as much interest in trying to attack or deal with the problem of racism in American society. And so I would argue that the FCC started goading churches in the north, and to some extent in the south, to begin addressing issues of race. How were they reading scripture? What did their liturgies look like? The FCC would actually prepare liturgies on race relations Sunday's, scriptures to read, hymns to be sung. There was some discussion even about whether children should be informed about issues dealing with lynching, or maybe if that was too graphic, we should make them aware that God created all humans equal, and so on. [[And one way of doing that was highlighting certain scriptures, I'm thinking about with regard to unity in the church, Jesus, his priestly prayer, and john 17, Acts or Ephesians, where Jesus where Paul is talking about breaking down the barriers that exists between Gentiles, and Jews. And so emphasis on unity, collective work, and I would not,]] So, the theology of brotherhood was an argument that invidious distinction between the races was contrary to Christian gospel that all are one in Christ. Additionally, some of the members of the Department of Race Relations didn't necessarily imagine before 1946, that they were trying to undermine the entire system of segregation, but trying to work within it. You might say it was a failure of imagination. The notion that segregation could be completely undermined just seemed inconceivable to some, because it seemed to be

such a fact and such a reality. Now, it is true, I would argue, that the kind of theology they proposed was just fundamentally incompatible with the system of segregation. It only became, shall we say, conscious in the 1940s, when the FCC began reflecting on the nature of racism in Nazi Germany, the claims that African American soldiers were making in returning from the war, and when a more heightened awareness among sociologists, anthropologists and so on, emerged about the insidious effects of scientific and biological racism. And so in 1946 President Truman, in fact, was present at this event in Columbus, Ohio, for the first time, a major Protestant organization, in this case, the FCC, claimed that segregation was contrary to the Christian gospel. And they made a kind of robust theological argument by collecting all of the various scriptural passages that they had been utilizing, drawing upon the most recent sociological literature that rejected the notion of scientific racism, that there was such a thing as a hierarchy of races. [[And so making the full case both from social scientific data and Christian theological tradition, about the unity of the human race, and the unity of Christians in the body of Christ, and so on.]] That's what in the most basic form I mean by a theology of brotherhood and the ways in which it was different from the kind of dominant theological views that persisted, for example, in the south into the 50s, into the 60s.

Ethan Goodnight 9:24
In about a month and a half, you'll be sharing a bit of the project with the Warren Center, and I was wondering if you could preview what you're going to focus on in this presentation?

Curtis Evans 9:50
[[Yeah, I suspect that some people are going to want to know more about the details of the anti lynching campaign, even though I talked I mean, I write a bit about it in the chapter. But I have, like]] I have several concerns in mind. One: this is a kind of act of historical retrieval. I think scholars are aware of the NAACP, [[and to some extent specialists in southern history are aware of]] the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, the main Southern organization that was involved in the campaign against lynching, and even [[certain Southern specialists,]] the Association of Women Against lynching in the south, but very few people know about the Federal Council of Churches' anti-lynching campaign.[[And one I'm making that argument about the cultural prestige, if for lack of a better way of putting it, the Federal Council of Churches. most white Southerners, basically loathe the NAACP, they felt it was a communist front. And I argue that there's a way in which by working specifically with the churches, the FCC was able at least to persuade certain southerners, in fact, that if they did not do something about lynching, the federal government, they would try to get the federal government involved and even some Southern organizations, in fact, because of states rights, tradition, and so on, were very much hesitant about supporting a federal anti lynching bill as the FCC started to do in the 1930s.]] I think the other thing is that there was a correspondence between this emphasis on moral suasion and education, many Southern organization and the FCC were very similar in that regard,

except that the FCC was out ahead in front of them in terms of its critique. In fact, one of the things I'm wanting to make the argument about is that you see, as early as the 1930s, what many sociologists began pointing out in the 1960s and 1970s, that there was an increasing division between educated clergy and people in the pews. I, in fact, argue that the FCC [[in part because these were very highly literate figures who were involved in these various departments, when it began involving itself in local campaigns like anti lynching, the the antagonism that it]] experienced antagonism from local white Southern churches that was pretty much categorical in terms of opposition: on theological grounds, on the claim that it was meddling in their affairs, that it was an elite organization from Manhattan, and so forth, and so on. But the prestige of the FCC allowed it to have a certain influence. When FDR spoke before the FCC in 1933, in Washington, DC, on its 25th anniversary, what was his topic? Lynching. Even though he was not as actively engaged in the anti-lynching campaign, as many of them would have wanted, nonetheless, he added a certain aura as President, in support of the FCC and some of the work that it was doing. Similarly, Harry S Truman, for example, began adopting a number of anti-lynching measures in the late 1940s, similar to the kind of argument that the FCC itself was making. And so I'm trying to make an argument that by lending its public voice to the anti-lynching campaign, the FCC made a significant impact in terms of moral outrage against the practice of lynching. But also by drawing other people and groups into this campaign against lynching the FCC lent a certain moral prestige that perhaps the NAACP did not have in certain quarters, even though the NAACP was the leading organization against, anti-lynching. In fact, it worked, the FCC worked alongside the NAACP. And so I wanted to sort of make an argument about historical retrieval that it is important to narrate what exactly was the anti lynching campaign in the FCC, because most people are unaware of it. [[Secondly, was there something distinctive about this particular religious organization that was distinctive compared to the anti lynching campaign and the NAACP, I argue, in some ways, it was because they were very much concerned about the reputation of Christianity. And in fact, the reputation of the United States as a as a reputed purveyor of democratic values as a Christian nation, in fact, and I think that the anti lynching campaign calls the FCC to begin engaging in what David Hollinger refers to as this mood of interrogation because they began experiencing what the level of racial oppression was in American society as they engaged in the anti lynching campaign, and various other attacks against racial oppression in American society. And I think that that is one factor among others, why the FCC, for example, diverge from the nascent organization, the National Association of evangelicals, which was interested in making a robust argument about the United States as a Christian nation, even in fact trying to lobby for that, basically to be a constitutional amendment that the United States was under God, ruled by Jesus Christ, so forth and so on. And so I think that that's a significant way of thinking about the anti lynching campaign as being one factor in challenging the FCC, and basically making some sort of claim that the United States was a Christian nation, instead asking, would a Christian nation allow its minorities to be burned alive or to be lynched and engaged and to be the subject of

this massive form of violence? You see that again, and again in the reports and the anti lynching campaign and the race relations Sundays each, each year, from 1923 to 1950.]]

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Ethan Goodnight 15:56

That's absolutely fascinating. And I mean, I've read a bit about anti lynching campaigns. And you know, the FCC just doesn't factor in to any of the analysis that I've that I've encountered. So this is definitely a major historical gap to fill. And I appreciate your comments on kind of this kind of struggle over what it what does it mean for the US to be a Christian nation? I am curious with the role that about the role that ecumenism could play, both for the FCC and in this piece, and whether you see any difference between white and black churches and how they're approaching ecumenism, or the kind of if you could talk a little bit more about the public kind of capital, you talked about the prestige of the FCC? How much of that was based in their kind of call for for unity, within Christianity?

Curtis Evans 16:46

Yeah, so here's how I think about sort of ecumenical version of form of Christianity. I mean, there are a number of conferences, I think of one I think that was held in Edinburgh, 1910 or thereabout, maybe Edinburgh, or maybe I'm confusing with one that was held in London, but but there are a number of conferences that are held in the early 20th century. They have several aims. One is they want to make a public statement that there's a kind of organic unity that exists within the Christian churches, the Christian bodies, despite their sort of multifarious forms. I mean, there's an uneasiness I mean, this goes back to people like Philip Schaff and a number of others but an easiness, about proliferation of denominations in American society, because they feel one, it doesn't show any form of public unity that exists in Christianity. They're overlapping in the kind of work that they do. They're competing as it were, for the same resources, so to speak. And so I think it's a kind of theological argument about some form of Christian unity and trying to work together. And so there are 33 denominations. When the FCC formed in 1908. The main African American denominations actually have a representative status them at the African Methodist Episcopal Church national Baptist Convention. I think the colored Methodist Church in I'm missing one other org, I think is AMEZ African Methodist Episcopal Zion. And the FCC is also a kind of legitimating body. Like if you're interested in chaplaincy work during the First World War. It's like your status in relationship to the FCC is a big factor in terms of whether or not you're involved in that process. It's interesting thinking about this from a long point of view and the way in which evangelicals began taking up that particular responsibility of chaplaincy in the relationship to the military, but that's a longer story. Um, so I mean, I, I do believe that there's a sense in which African American churches are wrestling with sort of ecuminism, but in a sort of different way. There's a there are what's called I think, federation of Negro churches that formed in the 1930s

Reverdy Ransom is one figure who's involved. Some have argued that one of the reasons that that group formed was one, they didn't feel that the FCC I haven't found direct evidence for this was doing sufficient work with regard to race issues that once a year annual race relations suddenly was simply insufficient to address the problem of race and some of the other projects. And then they also felt this is the least I've read other scholars on this, that the emphasis on the power of liturgy was just a bit naive in terms of how to address the problem of race, how to attack frontally segregation and so on. My sense, though, is that African American church is we're occupied with a different problem. And I some of this I deal with in my book, the burden of black religion. One is James Weldon Johnson and a number of others admire the catholic church because they have this view that the Catholic Church is this sort of massive collective institution that's able to Marshall the resources of its congregants in a way that Protestant churches, because they're dividing and so on, are not able to do. And so they imagine Carter G. Woodson and others a collected black church, what Carter G. Woodson calls the new Negro church that will take on these responsibilities, they will combine economic, political and other resources of black people so that they can be a major force in American society, and deal with some of the problems that African American communities are facing, but also somehow elicit recognition or insight recognition, positive recognition from broader American society, because they're making their political economic effects known. I think that the theological dimension I'm not, I don't mean to downplay it in African American communities. But I think the theological dimension is more prominent as a form of public witness for the organization like the FCC and to some extent you even see it in the, what I call the, the symbolic function of anti lynching and so on. I mean, there are concrete goals they're interested in, but they want to make a public statement about this is what authentic Christianity looks like this is how we address certain issues. And this is what we need to think about with regard to the public witness of the church. In fact, one of their founding statements was that they wanted to demonstrate the sufficiency of Christianity to solve the race problem. That was definitely an ambitious goal. [laughter]

And, and returning to that particular foundational statement, um, there are organizations like the World Council of Churches that have more of an international focus. And so the FCC, along with the various other organizations, in the 1930s, began making public statements about rising nationalistic spirit in Nazi Germany, for example. And there's a way in which the ecumenical churches are acutely aware of their connection internationally. And so they make theological claims that the church should transcend ethnic national and various other boundaries. Now, what the other side of that is that I would argue that more conservative Christians tended to have a more nationalistic and bounded theology, that is to say, an elevation of the American nation, deep suspicion of organizations like the United Nations, for example, where there was an attempt to make a kind of argument about universal human rights and so on. And that's where I think the because other scholars have looked at the ways in which the FCC contributed, for example, to a statement of universal rights with the with the United Nations and so on. I think that that what I would call the social and

political implications of this ecumenical theology become evident in terms of their attempt to sort of work with secular organizations, and in some cases, members are part of those organizations and trying to think about ways to get various nations to work together on problems of war, poverty, and so on. But you see, a deep seated suspicion on the part of evangelicals on acc- the worry about a world church organization, a concern about the sovereignty of the United States being ceded to these various organization, or, and so on. And so I think that the ecumenical theology and approach has political implications. And you see the ways in which it sort of begins distinguishing even though it was I'm, in fact, I would argue that it goes back even to the First World War and how conservative Christians are responding to that, and the FCC, and so on their willingness to support it on an international organization, and so on. But the final thing I just wanted to say, though, is that it doesn't seem to me that, in principle, the nascent National Association of evangelicals was opposed to ecumenicalism, if we're talking about Christians working together for common goals, what they tended to differ from is it had to have on and would be precisely the same, essentially the same theological view, the view, the same view of the Bible. And as long as you didn't subsume this into a sort of a larger organization that took away authority or control from local organizations. Having said that, the FCC actually had no power to dictate polity, or theology, it made it very explicitly clear from its formation. So it seems to me it was primarily just theological and political differences that led evangelicals because evangelicals were not averse in principle to ecuminism because, in fact, beginning in the 1940s, they began forming their own organizations and making a kind of theological argument argument about at least working together on various projects.]]]]]

Ethan Goodnight 24:54
You were just mentioning how evangelical are more bounded more nationalistic, more suspicious of kind of international or global efforts like the World Council of Churches around kind of the the 1930s and 1940s. I'm wondering if you how you see that playing out today, whether you still see kind of a divide between more conservative, evangelical, nationalistic, Christian groups who are maybe still using, as you said, ecumenism as an organizing tool? But, you know, interior just in internally? And what what that could mean for kind of your role and engagement with the Warren centers theme this year of religion and public life?

Curtis Evans 25:40
[[yeah, yeah, I certainly think there is continuity.]] evangelicals remain as a religious group, or if we want to call them a religious group, a voting bloc, and so on, most consistently hostile for example, to the United Nations, and furthermore, to what they regard as the United States, potentially ceding its sovereignty to organizations such as the United Nations. Secondly, evangelicals have been persistently the most vocal in claims of American exceptionalism. Now American exceptionalism is expressed in different ways. But it for evangelicals, it's usually tied to a kind of historical narrative, that part of it is defensive, which is to say that

liberals have made the claim that the United States is somehow uniquely racist, imperialistic, and so on. But we were founded as a Christian nation, we have been the leading proponent of democratic values in the world, and the list would go on. But it's a it's a basic claim that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, and that there's something special and distinct about the United States. And it's not merely in terms of what one could demonstrate empirically in terms of like the United States' wealth, or the United States' manufacturing across the course of the 20th century, and so on, but an argument about the United States having a special and unique relationship with God. And that leads to one a certain degree of suspicion to criticism, certain kinds of criticism, and a hesitancy to claim, for example, that systemic racism, for example, exists in American society. [[And that's the point I was trying to make about the divergent ways in which Evangelicals and liberal Protestants have thought about the United States as a Christian nation, and their willingness to work with various organizations such as the United Nations. Some of this, in fact, is evident, even in the attempt by Mike Pompeo, for example, to sort of articulate a new statement about human values wanting to ground it explicitly in either Christian principles or theistic principles, his suspicion of the United Nation and the criticism of the United Nation. And also the argument about the ways in which the United States is distinct compared to European nations, and so on. I do.]] And the other point I want to make is that there's a way in which, although it overlaps from time to time, evangelicals have been less concerned about what we might call religious liberty writ large, than specifically protecting minority Christian communities around the world. And, and so when Donald Trump, for example, talking about the pastor who was released from Turkey, for example, a number of evangelicals are lauding the president, specifically because of the concern about the work of a Christian pastor. And you see that, in fact, in Mike Pompeo and a number of others, when they're talking about religious liberty, usually they're referring to Christian minorities in other countries preparing, protecting their right to preach the Christian gospel. And they've, they've generally, I mean, I don't want to make the claim that there are no evangelicals out there who don't share this view. But generally speaking, they've not been as concerned about say, Muslim or Hindu rights, and so forth and so on. And that's what I mean by a particular particularistic view. One is it's a particular concern about Christians ability to preach the Christian gospel in various contexts. But also, there's a way in which it's an argument about the distinct nature of American society, there's a way in which Christianity and American exceptionalism is inextricably linked for many evangelicals. And I do think that that leads to a certain kind of, as I say, suspicion to any sort of organization, or cooperative work that they feel could potentially cede what they regard as the distinct sovereignty of the United States. And so I think that that's the way in which that kind of ecumenical approach on the part of liberal Protestants has diverged from evangelicals. [[The other point I want to make is that, I mean, David Hollinger and others talk about the ways in which liberal Protestants have not sort of reproduced themselves, I mean that in a literal sense of having as many children as evangelicals, but in the sense of their children, staying In these churches, well, I don't know is to be [??]. One area of continuity, though is the willingness of these liberal Protestants to work with various secular

organizations without necessarily making much of the fact that they own that liberal protestants though they have their own distinctive theology, they're still comfortable working alongside, in fact, the argument that I'm making is that they're very comfortable working with NAACP. And it's even though they have their own distinctive theological arguments, the particular ways in which they go about trying to change attitudes in the broader society with respect to lynching and racial oppression, are not all that different from the NAACP until on, I think there's something to be noted about that kind of continuity in terms of working alongside and with these various secular organizations where evangelicals, especially post 1960s, have tended to work more with religious organizations, conservative Catholics, Mormons, and so on, on issues like abortion, for example, same sex marriage or homosexuality more generally. And that's something to be noted, even though I realized they're generally, there are too many generalizations by just putting them in these broad camps, but they still have a certain degree of validity in terms of the kind of continuity in terms of the connections of religion and public life from the 1930s to the present moment.]]

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Ethan Goodnight 31:28

So to pickup on what, the comment you're just noticing, or making about a more liberal Christian organization, like the FCC working with secular organizations to kind of try to accomplish the same goals. I'm wondering, you know, based on on your work in, in your first book burden of black religion, where you talk about all these different burdens that this concept of black religion, or this vision of the black church has been expected to bear. I'm wondering if you could comment a bit about the current situation, with the Black Lives Matter movement, where a lot of [conservative] Christian groups, see black lives matter as secular or even as explicitly anti religious and are very wary about supporting what they're doing. And I'm wondering if you could comment on either the liberal conservative divide in the approach to supporting Black Lives Matter, or even if you what any, any thoughts or insights you have, into a current burden, that the black church that black religion is being called to bear in 2020?

Curtis Evans 32:32

So the first thing to be said is, I'm one of one of the scholars who believes that there is significant discontinuity, but post 1960s, that the burden that was placed on black churches has changed. And by that, I mean, partly because of the system of segregation. And the just the recognition that black churches were able to, certainly under constrained circumstances flourish in certain ways. The expectations, and the demands that were placed on them were heightened. I don't know enough about the details of individual black churches and how they relate to Black Lives Matter, to make a comment on the sense of suspicion. I mean, one is, my sense is that public figures who are involved in issues of police brutality, gun violence in African American communities, and so on, are just happy to get as many allies as they can, whether it's black lives matter,

African American religious leaders, and so on. There is certainly division, but that's usually the division in my view is on social issues. I mean, I'm sorry, on what we might call cultural issues, rather than on necessarily, at least on political economic issues. What I mean by that is, my sense is that many African American pastors, and religious people in the pews, so to speak, are just as concerned about police brutality, gun violence, racial inequality, as leaders of Black Lives Matter, even if they're not out in the streets, protesting and so on. However, when it comes to same sex marriage, and issues dealing with sexuality, more generally, African American church people tend to be much more conservative. And that's where you would see some divergence in terms of how they might link themselves or not with black lives matter movement. And there is some talk about who founded the movement, if and what their sexuality is, and how that might relate to whether or not black churches can give their full support to the movement, so on. I mean, I've heard conversations of that kind, but I don't think that hinders them from collective work on some of those main issues. I mean, I just think that there's a way in which African American Life is too fractured in a contemporary context where such that it's solely African American churches who are expected to engage in these particular issues where there is, there are white allies, liberal Protestants, reformed Jews, you name it. And so I just think that the contemporary context is very different than the civil rights era where I mean, even though a lot of scholarship is pointing out, of course, that there were a number of secular leaders and for that matter religious leaders who dissented from Martin Luther King Jr, that there was no unified civil rights movement. But I do think that the contemporary context is very much different. It is the case, however, that, and I think I want to say this as a generalization that for secular liberals, there has been much less concern about the intersection of religion and public life in African American communities, than there has been about the intersection of religion and public life in white Protestant communities, in other words, deep fear about a theocratic takeover with regard to the christian right. And I certainly think that that continues to be a notable feature of American life, were even campaigning or speaking in African American churches, reaching out to them, there's just a level of comfort there. But then there's a lot of writing and concern, one might even say inconsistency in terms of what's happening in white, Protestant, Christian churches who tend to vote Republican, for example. So that's an interesting phenomenon. I mean, we understand in part the reasons for that in terms of history of that African American, as a general minority, and also tending to vote, more progressive on certain political issues and so on. But I think it is fair to say, though, that there's just much more comfort in whether we're talking about Moral Mondays with with William Barber in North Carolina, and the ways in which his work and ministry and political activism is talked about in a more favorable way, by liberals, say, even secular liberals, for example, than, what's happening with Jerry Falwell, Jr, for example, and his political view. So I do think that it's fair to say that there remains this kind of divide in the sense of general comfort with African Americans making public statement, religious leaders and churches about political issues, and a deep seated uneasiness and wariness about religion and

public life on the part of the christian right. And White evangelical Christians, for example, even though it's acknowledged that they have been very active on political issues.]]]

Ethan Goodnight 37:44
Thank you. So as you're pursuing this work, uncovering the the story of the FCC, I'd love to hear at the end, just some of your hopes for engaging with the community of Harvard faculty, faculty, fellows, postdoc, fellows, doctoral students, who are a part of the Warren Center program.

Curtis Evans 38:03
Yeah. So, one is, I'm eager to get feedback because I know that any scholar has blind spots, I don't really want to be in a position of in a, an "apologist" for the FCC, even though I think I am doing a work of historical retrieval, because I think this is a very important organization. I think there are ways in which it tells us something about the intersection of religion and public life, especially beginning in the 1920s, that doesn't at least initially fit into the sort of easy paradigms of liberal modernists, and fundamentalist by looking at African American men and white women and African American women, in particular. The work that they're doing in the Federal Council of Churches, we see a kind of different, for lack of a better way of putting this slice of Christianity, that doesn't easily fit, because when you read some of their material, it reads similar to kind of an evangelical approach in terms of how they're reading or appealing to the Bible. But then on the other hand, when it comes to the kind of activism that they're engaged in, it's the set of issues that animate them are very different than what's animating the fundamentalists. [[there's no discussion about biblical inerrancy, or anti evolution campaign as it's taking place in the 1920s. So it's, and they're not the same as sort of educated elite white Protestants in terms of the intense work that they're doing on racial issues. George Edmund Hanes the African American, for example, who was involved with it. So I want to show a kind of different form of Christianity in terms of how it emerges, and and that, I feel like it needs its own narrative, and specifically, and by looking at it through the lens of the Department of race relations within this organization.]]] I'm also interested in hearing more about like, how do I make this relatively narrow project speak to broader issues in the study of religion. [[I don't want to predict what those issues might be. I mean, obviously, we're talking about religion and public life.]] But I'm very much invested in that question, because one of the arguments I want to make is that, that you see a shift in the 20th century where someone like Billy Graham is eagerly invited to the White House by Richard Nixon, the in the successor organization, then and National Council of Churches to the FCC, they have no access to the White House in the late 1960s, because of the opposition to Vietnam War. These are the same people who ancestor so to speak, were cozy with FDR and Harry S. Truman. And so thinking about the ways in which the cultural force or significance of a certain form of Protestantism wanes over the course of the 20th century, what that says about that particular version of Protestantism, but more broadly about religion and public life. And no one thought it strange, for example,

that FDR would speak before this particular group, and that Truman would speak in 1946, on the topic of brotherhood, before this particular religious organization. And so I'm hoping at least as I said, to get some helpful feedback about this relatively narrow topic, how does it speak to broader issues, and especially broader conversations about the study of religion? I guess the final thing I want to say is that I'm just really fascinated about the the center in thinking about people who are working in very different time periods, different subject matter about the ways in which we can sort of illuminate one another's projects by thinking about certain recurring themes or certain recurring elements. I mean, one of the themes for example, I was thinking about when we were reading the piece on Andrew Preston on missionary impa- missionaries in the late 19th century, how one thinks about what we might call the unintended and sometimes int- a hoped for consequences of forms of religious activism, as well as the ways in which we think about historical actors and their intention, like people talk about what were missionaries hoping to accomplish? And if we can sort of, is it useful to separate what historical actors hoping and 10 from the, the cumulative consequences of their action, because I think almost all of our projects in one form or another, at least the ones that I've heard thus far, are wrestling with that particular issue, and what's the significance of that kind of distinction? But there but more than anything else, though, I'm just kind of open minded about what kinds of advice and feedback that I might get for my project. I'm really looking forward to that.