Introduction

Despite the fact that black slavery structured life in the Americas for centuries, the church has canonized only two people—the freeborn Peruvian mulatto Martín de Porres and the Spanish born Jesuit Peter Claver—whose lives are connected to this evil practice. Through these men, I argue, the church remembers itself as a hero to black slaves and their racialized descendants. In the decades after abolition, for example, white Catholics in the United States began to exalt both Claver as "the apostle of the Negroes" and Porres as the patron saint of mixed-race people and racial harmony.[1]

But in truth neither man deemed Africanized slavery to be evil; nor apparently has the church: it has not considered opposition to black slavery either a sign of holiness or a requirement for it. Even worse, both Claver and Porres appeared extraordinarily holy to their earliest advocates not because they challenged or destabilized the regnant racial order but precisely for the ways they held it together. Rather than protecting black slaves from slavery as his champions claim, Claver instead helped to incorporate them into it. And rather than using Christian humility in order to subvert the racial order, Porres enacted a racially bifurcated version of it.[2] Both sainthoods also helped to fashion and justify a distinctly Catholic theology of Africanized

1. John Richard Slattery, *The Life of St. Peter Claver, S.J.: The Apostle of the Negroes* (Philadelphia: Kilner, 1893).
2. For examples of this hagiographical trope, see Alex García-Rivera, *St. Martín de Porres: The "Little Stories" and the Semiotics of Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

slavery in which re-fashioned supposedly racially neutral Catholic virtues such as humility, love, respect for authority, and peace accorded with the logic of racialized slavery.[3] Catholics endorsed Africanized slavery not *despite* their Catholic habituation but largely *because* of it.

Defining Racial Evil

The church overestimates its corporate racial virtue because it misunderstands racial evil. Today, we inhabit not the aftermath of slavery but its afterlife. The afterlife of slavery attempts to preserve, revivify, and reinvent the association between blackness and slave status, both materially and symbolically, by whatever means necessary.[4] But what is slavery? Slavery does more than simply force people to labor for free or reduce them to property.[5] As Orlando Patterson explains, slavery comprises "the permanent, violent domination of natally alienated and generally dishonored persons."[6] As such, it plunges its victims into a state of social death and operates as the "ultimate form of parasitism."[7] Slavery also justifies itself by figuring enslaved people as those who deserved to die, due either to criminal misconduct or defeat on the battlefield, but were allowed to live due to a stranger's mercy. Given a gift he does not deserve and owing his master a debt he can never repay, an enslaved person is expected to feel only gratitude toward his captor.

Because slavery enacts a unique form of power, so does its ongoing afterlife. Each of slavery's components still presses down on black people even today. More than simply harming black people, the afterlife of slavery empowers everyone else: nonblacks feed off of both black people and blackness much as individual masters did. I therefore

3. Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Church = Lumen Gentium* (Washington, DC: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1964), pars. 40, 50.
4. Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 207–8.
5. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 17–18, 27–28,
6. Ibid., 14.
7. Ibid., 334–42.

designate this form of racial evil by the term "antiblackness supremacy" in order to identify the fact that all nonblack people, especially white ones, amass both power and privilege at black people's expense.

Why call this form of supremacy "antiblackness supremacy?" The phrase "antiblackness supremacy" undoubtedly sounds syntactically wooden. But, rather than being a weakness, such awkwardness represents a strength. Precisely because it does not roll easily off the tongue, "antiblackness supremacy" operates in interruptive fashion; it cannot be aesthetically assimilated. Unlike the phenomenon of antiblackness supremacy, whose routine pervasiveness, like camouflage, can make it appear not to exist at all, the phrase "antiblackness supremacy" cannot be rendered ordinary, mundane, or familiar.[8] It sticks out precisely because it does not fit within sentences the way that we expect it to.[9] And in contrast to other popular racial terms such as "white supremacy" or "white privilege," the term "antiblackness supremacy" explicitly positions black people as victimized by the unique form of power unleashed by the Africanization of slavery.

And in contrast to the term "antiblack," the term antiblackness supremacy neutralizes what I identify as the "What about Oprah?" defense. This defense points to the economic prosperity, power, and acclaim enjoyed by prominent black individuals such as Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, and Michael Jordan as evidence that racial injustice no longer prevails.[10] The noun *antiblackness* creates more rhetorical and conceptual space to consider the ways in which racial evil operates as a corporate act. It also better captures the dynamic

8. Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3, 4.
9. For more on the rationale behind this term, see my chapter titled "Black Exceptionalism: Antiblackness Supremacy in the Afterlife of Slavery," in a forthcoming book on antiblackness edited by Vincent Lloyd and Andrew Prevot.
10. For recent examples of the "What about Oprah?" defense, see Mark Joseph, "No, Oprah, America Isn't Racist," *USA TODAY*, November 25, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/zu7vfr7; Jonah Goldberg, "Oprah, Obama, and the Racism Dodge," *National Review Online*, November 20, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/pulet76; "O'Reilly Clashes with Harvard Professor over Oprah: She's 'Indicting' America as a Racist Nation," FoxNation.com, November 19, 2013, http://tinyurl.com/zy4x943; Daniel Schorr, "A New, 'Post-Racial' Political Era in America," NPR.org, January 28, 2008, http://tinyurl.com/mypcmr.

character of racial oppression; just as racial boundaries do, so racialized power changes over time, conceding to new pressures and seizing new opportunities.

Catholic Saints and Racial Virtue

More than simply habituated by slavery's ongoing afterlife, Catholic hagiographical processes have helped to animate it. In particular, the sainthoods of Claver and Porres have helped to promote the following: a perverse attachment to black gratitude; an immoderate fear of black rebellion; an uncritical celebration of interracial proximity, affection, and love; an insatiable desire for white saviors and heroes; and a misplaced desire to elevate white heroes. Thus, even when deployed by white Catholic champions of racial justice, their sainthoods only affirmed the racially distorted worldviews of even these well-intentioned whites. They did even less to disrupt the bad racial habits of their more vicious counterparts. Ultimately, while their sainthoods may have helped advance causes such as ecclesial inclusion and social integration, neither that of Claver nor Porres has undermined antiblackness supremacy's root cause, the afterlife of Africanized slavery.

Corporate confidence in these men's racial virtue nonetheless has only grown with time. In recent decades, U.S. Catholics have continued to update the stories of Claver and Porres, refashioning them to fit within the ideological parameters of the post–Civil Rights Era. For example, on its parish website, Saint Peter Claver Church in Los Angeles describes Claver as a racial visionary and emancipator in the style of Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. To this end, it contrasts the "brutal dehumanization [done] by slave masters" with the "self-respect, dignity, and worth" that Claver supposedly conferred on the slaves he encountered. In this same spirit, the Catholic Worker House located on the predominantly black Westside of South Bend, Indiana, bears his name, and popular Jesuit priest James Martin calls Claver "one of my favorite Jesuit saints."[11] And, in his 2000 pastoral letter on racism, Chicago's Cardinal Francis George praised Porres as

one of several saints who "has especially promoted racial harmony and social justice."[12]

The subjective adaptability of our hagiographical memory is not in itself bad.[13] Like all saints, Claver and Porres have served as icons of the church's self image and narrate an ecclesial autobiography.[14] But this plasticity has allowed contemporary Catholics to imagine these saints as symbols of not what the church was but what they wish it had been. In misremembering these men, the church also misremembers itself. More than simply perceiving their purported racial virtuousness as evidence of its own, the church celebrates its celebration of them: as one white, twentieth-century cleric proclaimed, "The Church not only baptizes and ordains and consecrates Negroes and mulattoes: She canonizes them as saints."[15] How can the church repent for sins it has not yet acknowledged?

But perhaps the recent canonization of Josephine Bakhita, a Sudanese-born slave who found freedom in Italy, proves that the church has begun to build new hagiographical habits. However, although Bakhita was holy, her sainthood will do little to disrupt the operation of the specific vice of antiblackness supremacy within the church's corporate body. Bakhita's enslavement came at the hands of Arab, predominantly Muslim masters, while American slavery was sustained almost exclusively by white Christians. When the church celebrates the holiness only of those black slaves who have suffered from someone else's cruelty, it indulges in what I identify as Catholic racial triumphalism. This deeply rooted ideology presents the church as the supreme liberator of black slaves and their descendants and denies any participation in or culpability for their enslavement and

11. Alex Mikulich, Laurie Cassidy, and Margaret Pfeil, *The Scandal of White Complicity in US Hyper-incarceration: A Nonviolent Spirituality of White Resistance* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xv; James Martin's Facebook page. Accessed September 9, 2013. http://tinyurl.com/hj2tbqv.
12. See Cardinal Francis George, *Dwell in My Love: A Pastoral Letter on Racism,* April 4, 2001, http://tinyurl.com/jkwhgbk.
13. And certainly, none of the aforementioned Catholics would deny that Claver was flawed, but they believe Claver's ministry to the blacks truly saintly.
14. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 272, 280.
15. Celia Langdeau Cussen, *Black Saint of the Americas: The Life and Afterlife of Martín de Porres* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 194.

continued oppression. In this way, the church enacts the corporate vice of antiblackness supremacy through not just what it imagines but also what it refuses to admit about itself.

What about the pending cause to canonize the Haitian-born former slave Pierre Toussaint? Unlike Bakhita, he was held by white Catholic masters. Surely his canonization campaign evidences at least some racial progress. However, despite initial appearances, the story of Toussaint's holiness in fact perpetuates a racialized ideology of white mastership and black servility perhaps even more emphatically than the sainthoods of Claver and Porres do. It does so not because Toussaint was not holy but because the church's racial vices are tenacious. Indeed, unlike these other men's sainthoods processes, Toussaint's was not initiated until 1951, nearly a full century after slavery's abolition. Toussaint's case proves that the church cannot build new hagiographical habits simply by canonizing black Catholics, even those who endured slavery. The church cannot simply move beyond its bad racial habits; it must deliberately unmake them.

Of course the church needs more black Catholic saints, just as unacknowledged black Catholic saints deserve to be recognized as such. But the church does not corporately enact antiblackness supremacy because it has failed to canonize a sufficient number of black Catholic saints; the church has failed to canonize a sufficient number of black Catholic saints because it continues corporately to enact the vice of antiblackness supremacy.[16] As long as the church retains its antiblack habits, it will continue to struggle to describe black holiness in a way that does not affirm the logic of slavery's afterlife. One cannot expect to find something one cannot recognize simply by searching for it harder.

16. For more on the truly corporate character of the body of Christ, see Bernard P. Prusak, "Theological Considerations—Hermeneutical, Ecclesiological, and Eschatological Regarding," in *Memory and Reconciliation: The Church and the Faults of the Past*" *Horizons* 32, no. 1 (April 2005), 140–41.

Fugitive Saints

How, then, can the church begin to build new hagiographical habits? Inspired by the insights of a group of scholars sometimes known as "Afro-pessimists," this project offers black *fugitivity* as a strategy of corporate rehabituation.[17] Why? Although slavery consisted of more than simply preventing enslaved people from running away, it cannot inflict its other harms—natal alienation, social death, dishonor, and spectacular violence to name a few—unless it keeps enslaved people in their place. For this reason, black fugitives defied white mastership not just when they took flight, but also when they moved to spaces that were inaccessible to white supervision or in ways that were unsanctioned by white power. Still today antiblackness supremacy strives to place black people under surveillance in order to keep them under spatial control.[18] During the afterlife of slavery, black people continue to enact fugitivity any time they are perceived to be out of place, whether physically or metaphorically.

The concept of black fugitivity also enhances our understanding of the church's racial guilt. Just as the afterlife of slavery structures the world, so it pervades the church. Metabolizing the fruits of this racist habitat, the church participates in antiblackness supremacy in distinctly Catholic fashion. The sainthoods of Claver, Porres, and Toussaint in particular all have prevented black people from enacting fugitivity both during their lives and through the church's memory of them. In addition to occasionally recapturing runaway slaves or voluntarily submitting to enslavement themselves, these men also have helped to portray black fugitivity as sinful. The church has

17. While these scholars do not necessarily all embrace this term, the designation "Afro-pessimism" is often used to refer to the work of scholars like Fred Moten, Jared Sexton, Frank Wilderson, and Saidiya Hartman, who enlist Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery as social death to argue that black social life in the United States unfolds within what Hartman terms "the afterlife of slavery." These scholars also tend to draw heavily from the work of Frantz Fanon. For more on the debate surrounding this term, see Jared Sexton, "Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word," *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge,* no. 29 (2016), http://tinyurl.com/joxt76z.
18. Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage: The Dialectic of Slavery and Freedom in Arendt, Pettit, Rousseau, Douglass, and the Haitian Revolution* (Phd diss., The University of Chicago, 2007), 2.

opposed black fugitivity for specifically Catholic reasons and in specifically Catholic ways.

Their sainthoods further fuel the church's racially vicious habituation by discouraging the church from the deploying a fugitive approach to its hagiographical history. What do I mean by this? Catholics have updated the memories of Claver, Porres, and Toussaint alike primarily in support of the changing racial aspirations of successive generations of predominantly white Catholic racial reformers. Rather than distancing the church from its habits of racialized mastership, they end up strengthening them. In expanding the margins of the past that the church remembers as its own in this way, the church refuses the fugitivity of those black women and men who both escaped the institutional church and whose memory could not be captured by it.[19] Even well-intentioned white Catholics treat the past as their slave.

Enlisted as hagiographical strategy, fugitivity enables the church to forge a new way of remembering its past. Taking inspiration from actual black fugitives, it instructs the church to listen to the repressed and excluded voices of the racial prophets of the past without claiming them as its own. A fugitive approach to Catholic sainthood proposes the following: rather than seeking retroactively to place its saints on the side of racial justice, the church ought to permit the dangerous memories of the racially righteous to remain outside of it, undomesticated and fugitive. The church ought to judge all candidates for racial holiness by their relation to black fugitivity. A person does not bring racial "good news" unless she makes black fugitivity, as both a historical practice and an interpretive principle, more possible, not less so.

This prescription for a fugitive approach to the church's hagiographical memory neither disregards nor devalues other forms of resistance and survival. Black people have resisted antiblackness supremacy in many other ways—procuring abortions; committing suicide; poisoning their masters; slyly manipulating and/or outwitting

19. Fred Moten, "The Case of Blackness," *Criticism* 50, no. 2 (2008): 179.

them; falling in love; making music, poetry, and art; remaining behind in order to care for a child or an aging elder—to name just a few.[20] This book singles out fugitivity for its unique capacity to chasten antiblack habits of perceiving, acting, and doing theology; it does not, however, affirm the holiness of black fugitivity in order to deny the existence of authentic black saints who remained either under their masters' power or within the church's institutional structures.[21] It contends only that the church cannot hope to perceive these forms of holiness clearly until it first learns to appreciate the holiness displayed both in black fugitivity and by actual black fugitives.

Fugitive Memories

Before I present this fugitive approach to hagiography, I first must substantiate what may appear to be a specious claim that the church possesses a corporate character. Since this project primarily considers the church's hagiographical memory and its saint-making processes, the term *church* refers primarily to its historical and institutional existence. For this reason, I do not, for example, include "anonymous" Christians as members of the historically visible, institutional church.[22] Since this book analyzes the church's history through the lens provided by virtue theory, it treats the content of the church's character as the question it seeks to answer rather than the answer it knows in advance.[23] Like all moral agents, the church becomes what it does: we discern the church's identity by tracking its actions in history.[24] While the church receives its identity as a gift of God's grace, it has not always performatively received this identity as it should.[25]

20. Junius P. Rodriguez, *Encyclopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion*, vol. 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2007), 381, 455, 491, 501; Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635–1848* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 125.
21. See, for example, M. Shawn. Copeland, "A Cadre of Women Religious Committed to Black Liberation: The National Black Sisters' Conference," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 14, no. 1 (1996): 123–44.
22. I do not deny that so-called "anonymous Christians" exist, however. For more on this, see Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous' Christian" (*Theological Investigations* 14 [1976]: 280–94). For more on the development of church teaching regarding the salvation of non-Christians, see Francis A. Sullivan, *Salvation Outside the Church?: Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1992).
23. Prusak, "Theological Considerations," 143.
24. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* I–II.53.1 ad 1; 53.3; 71.4.

The term *church* therefore also measures the gap between the former and the latter.[26]

Because this project focuses on memory and fugitivity, however, it does use the term *church* in an admittedly idiosyncratic way, but not unjustifiably so. As with individual human beings, the church is, in a real sense, what it can remember of itself. But, also like individual human beings, it is of course more than that. Sometimes, then, the term *church* designates the identity the church has acquired as a result of its memories; in other cases, the term *church* speaks to this more objective identity that exists independently of the church's memories.[27] In this way, while some of American history's models of black fugitivity would have been fugitives from the church in both senses of the term, others would have been fugitives of the church only in the former sense of the term. These women and men would have considered themselves members of the Catholic Church in one way or another. As a hagiographical corrective, black fugitivity does not necessarily indicate that anyone ought to flee their relationship with Christ. It does not even require that one part ways with the institutional church.

More than simply reflecting the corporately vicious character of the church, this terminological duality also results from the nature of fugitivity itself. Just as the church both is and is not what it remembers itself to be, so fugitivity both should and should not exist. It should not exist in the sense that human beings should not be enslaved in the first place. Human beings may rightly wish to construct a future without this form of fugitivity. Since we inhabit slavery's afterlife, however, we have not yet outrun history's captors. For this reason, fugitivity must be preserved as long as slavery and its afterlives endure, because, in ending it, we would block an exit route out of enslavement.

25. Louis-Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Sacramental Reinterpretation of Christian Existence* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 146, 407, 425; Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 90, 105.
26. Bradford E. Hinze, "Ecclesial Repentance and the Demands of Dialogue," *Theological Studies* 61, no. 2 (June 200), 209.
27. This distinction parallels the distinction Rahner makes between the "invisible and visible church." O'Donovan et al., "A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church: A Symposium on Development in the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner," *Theological Studies* 38, no. 4 (1977): 744.

The church's inability to remember the saintliness of those who resisted antiblackness supremacy qualifies as similarly ambiguous. The fact that their lives have escaped and could not be captured by operative mechanisms of ecclesial memory indicts the church as aligned with enslavement and its afterlife, even if these fugitives counted themselves as Catholics. But the fact that these memories became fugitives in the first place means they must be allowed to remain as such, at least for now. The church participates in its own redemption not by seeking to recapture these memories but by recognizing itself as their captor.[28] Paraphrasing M. Shawn Copeland, Candace McLean explains, "There is wisdom and resistance that comes just from remembering what has been utterly lost."[29] The church's racial dysfunction lies not just in the way the church perceives its past but also in the church's past itself.

Rather than reducing the church to its racial vices, this project interrogates the church's hagiographical imagination in order to compel Catholics to stop underestimating those vices.[30] This analysis does not therefore reduce either hagiography or its critique to mere ideology. It instead takes seriously the Second Vatican Council's describing the church as "at the same time holy and always in need of being purified."[31] Why should we expect its processes of sainthood to be exempt from this?[32] While we should not confuse hagiography critique with historical positivism, neither should we shield the

28. Jared Sexton, "The Social Life of Social Death: On Afro-Pessimism and Black Optimism," *Tensions* 5 (Fall–Winter 2011): 10.
29. Candace Kristina McLean, "'Do This in Memory of Me': The Genealogy and Theological Appropriations of Memory in the Work of Johann Baptist Metz" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2012), 287.
30. Here my argument about the relation between sainthood and antiblackness resembles that made by George Tinker in the case of the church's missionizing oppression of indigenous peoples: rather than "criticizing [the church's] departed heroes," Tinker writes to "expose the illusion, the covert 'lie' of white self-righteousness as it was internalized and acted on by the missionaries themselves" (George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 4–5).
31. *Lumen Gentium*, para. 8. See also Karl Rahner's insistence that "one can no longer in any context of faith maintain that there are sinners 'in' the church as in an external confessional organization but that this carries no implication about the church itself," in Karl Rahner and William F. Gleeson, "The Church of Sinners," *CrossCurrents* 1, no. 3 (1951): 64–74. For more on this, see Leo J. O'Donovan, "A Changing Ecclesiology in a Changing Church: A Symposium on Development in the Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner," *Theological Studies* 38, no. 4 (1977), 744.
32. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets*, 10. See also Alan Neely, "Saints Who Sometimes Were:

church's hagiographical memory from historical scrutiny.[33] If the church does not know who or what it has been, how can it become what it should be?[34]

Utilizing Missionary Hagiography," *Missiology: An International Review* 27, no. 4 (October 1, 1999): 446.

33. Here I critique not what Francis Sullivan describes as "the Tradition with a capital T," that is, the gospel, but the sense of the word tradition that begins with a lowercase *t*, that is, "the traditionary process." Francis Sullivan, "Catholic Tradition and Traditions," in *The Crisis of Authority in Catholic Modernity,* ed. Michael J. Lacey and Francis Oakley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 115. For more on this, see Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography* (London: Longmans, Green, 1907), 219–20.
34. This critique builds upon the work of other scholars who have called attention to the connection between hagiography and white supremacy: M. Shawn Copeland, *The Subversive Power of Love: The Vision of Henriette Delille* (New York: Paulist Press, 2008); Molly H. Bassett and Vincent W. Lloyd, *Sainthood and Race: Marked Flesh, Holy Flesh* (New York: Routledge, 2014).