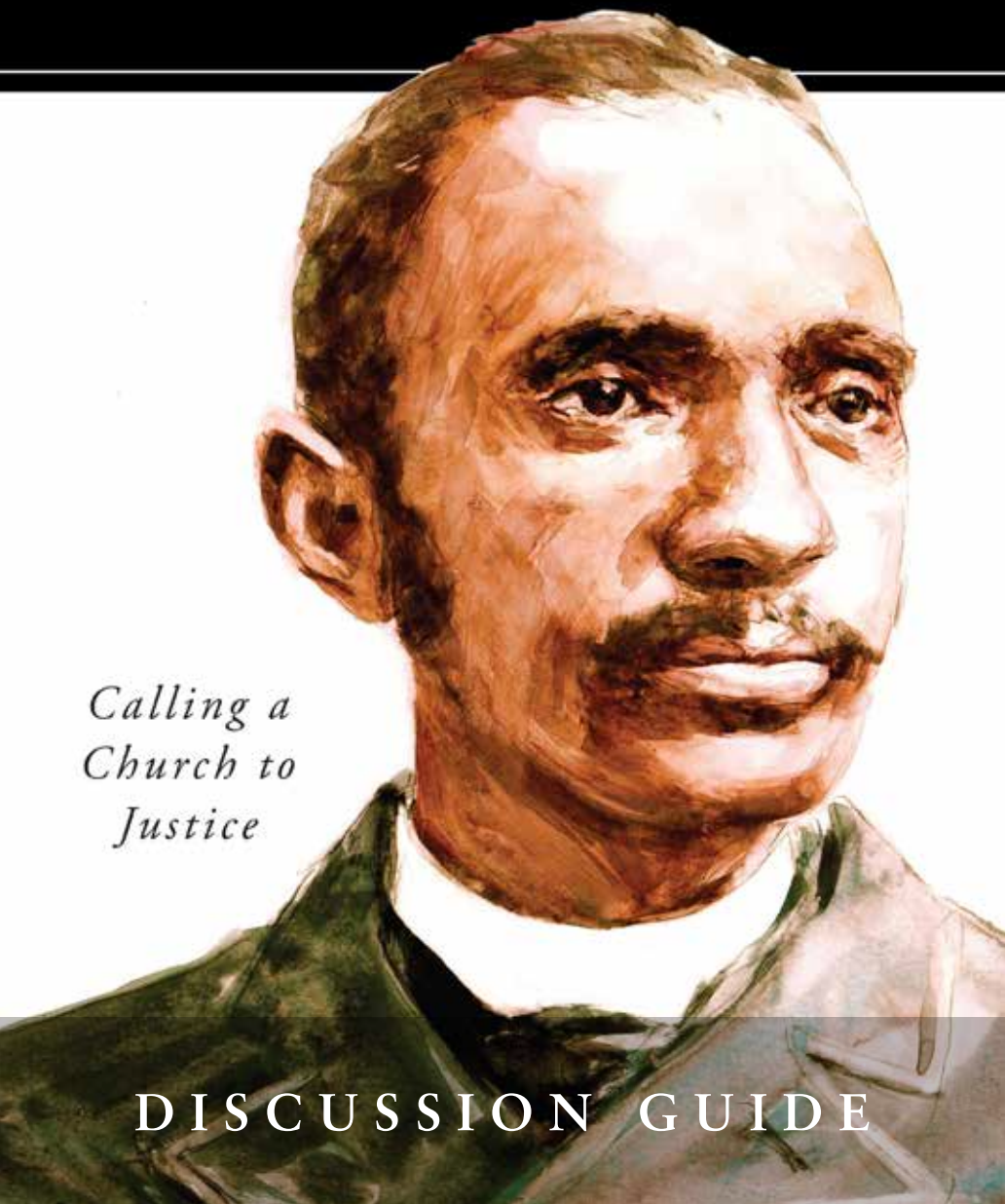


GARY B. AGEE

DANIEL RUDD

*Calling a
Church to
Justice*

DISCUSSION GUIDE



About the Book

In May of 1890, the *Christian Soldier*, an African American newspaper, identified the Catholic journalist and activist Daniel Arthur Rudd as the “greatest negro Catholic in America.” Yet many Catholics today are unaware of Rudd’s efforts to bring about positive social change during the early decades of the Jim Crow era. In *Daniel Rudd: Calling a Church to Justice*, Gary Agee offers a compelling look at the life and work of this visionary who found inspiration in his Catholic faith to fight for the principles of liberty and justice. Born into slavery, Rudd achieved success early on as the publisher of the *American Catholic Tribune*, one of the most successful black newspapers of its era, and as the founder of the National Black Catholic Congress.

Even as Rudd urged his fellow black Catholics to maintain their spiritual home within the fold of the Catholic Church, he called on that same church to live up to what he believed to be her cardinal teaching, “the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man.” Rudd’s hopeful spirit lives on today in the important work of the National Black Catholic Congress, as it carries forward his pursuit of social justice.

About the Author

Gary B. Agee teaches church history for the School of Theology and Christian Ministry at Anderson University, Indiana. Agee has been a pastor in the Church of God (Anderson) since 1985. He is currently the lead pastor of the Beachwood Church of God (Camden, Ohio). Agee is the author of numerous books including *A Cry for Justice: Daniel Rudd and His Life in Black Catholicism, Journalism, and Activism, 1854–1933* (2011).



Discussion Guide

Chapter One

1. Professor Agee makes clear that there is a lot we don't know about Daniel Rudd's background (and, as we'll see in later chapters, about significant chunks of his life). What does it say that one of the few things we do know about his childhood is the amount in dollars at which he was valued when he was four years old?
2. What are your thoughts on Fr. O'Connell's comments at Eliza Rudd's funeral?
3. Consider the fact that Daniel and his mother were both designated "mulatto" in census records, and reflect on the experiences this reveals. (Of course, they were far from the only two slaves with such a background, and of course, it was only one element of exploitation among so many others.) How does this impact your understanding of Daniel, his extended family, and also those who "sold," "bought," and "owned" them?
4. Rudd was advocating for the cause of slave reparations in the late 1800s. Of course, such reparations never came to be, and the question remains a volatile one today. Are you familiar with the arguments on both sides of the question? (Ta-Nehisi Coates' important article "The Case for Reparations," published by *The Atlantic* in 2014, offers a good foundation for consideration.) Where do you stand on the question and why?
5. What does Rudd's lifelong affection for and support of the Catholic Church say about his experience of being Catholic?

Chapter Two

1. Having moved to Springfield, Rudd began to be active not only in his faith life, but also in political matters. Why are the two aspects of one's life in society so often interconnected?
2. How does Rudd's work as a writer and publisher from early in his adult life offer an example of using one's own gifts and interests in living out one's faith in important ways? What are some examples of other gifts and interests that might also play a role in living and sharing one's faith?
3. Rudd was heavily involved in the debate about the segregation of schools and other institutions, and although the "right" answer to such a question seems obvious to us in hindsight today, it clearly was not so obvious to many people in Rudd's day. What questions—related to race or other social issues—which are hotly debated today might have answers that will seem obvious to people living a century or more from now?
4. In what ways have you seen, in our day, the Catholic Church serve as a place (to use Rudd's words) "where rich and poor, white and black, must drop prejudice at the threshold and go hand in hand to the altar"? Have you seen it locally? Nationally? How have you seen the Church fail to live up to such a vision?
5. Rudd was convinced that Catholic teaching could play an important role in "solving the race problem." What role might Catholic teaching have today in addressing racism and other problems related to race?

Chapter Three

1. In what ways has your own faith shaped your political convictions or activism?
2. Rudd's convictions about the Catholic Church as "the best hope for African Americans" is interesting, in light of the fact that proportionally so few black Americans were then and are now Catholic and that such a large portion of them were and are members of various Protestant denominations. In what ways was Rudd right? Why the disparity between the vision and the reality?
3. Why do you suppose Rudd recognized so easily the ways other denominations failed to treat blacks justly and the strengths within the Catholic community, but not vice versa? What cautionary lesson might this offer to us today, whether it be regarding race or any other issue?
4. Professor Agee notes that Rudd's appraisal of the Catholic Church's treatment of African Americans "appears a bit too generous at times." How would one honestly appraise the Catholic Church in this regard today?
5. How is "the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man" a strong foundation for addressing questions of race and social justice today? How is it inadequate?

Chapter Four

1. Are you familiar with Fr. Augustus Tolton and his own story? (Consider checking out another volume in the People of God biography series, *Augustus Tolton: The Church Is the True Liberator*, by Joyce Duriga!) Are you familiar with any black priests today?
2. Are you familiar with the life and ministry of St. Katharine Drexel? Are you familiar with any Catholics who are taking up today the cause of racial justice within the Church and in society?
3. Are you familiar with the life and ministry of Archbishop John Ireland? His activism on racial equality was part of his broader efforts to make Catholicism viable, concrete, and credible in a modern American context. Who is following in Archbishop Ireland's footsteps today?
4. What do you think of Ireland's insistence on the need to "obliterate absolutely all color line"? What value is there in his thinking, and is there any way in which some might consider it misguided, even if well intentioned, today?
5. Why was Ireland's tacit support of interracial marriage so "radical"? Why do you suppose interracial marriage was an aspect of racial equality that even otherwise staunch supporters of such equality were unable to support?

Chapter Five

1. Rudd went so far as to suggest that the disenfranchisement of black voters was a work of Satan. Is such strong language merited? Why?
2. Why might some of Rudd's activities detailed in this chapter be considered particularly courageous?
3. Agee quotes Rudd, writing on the official approval of the separate coach law, asking "How long, O Lord, how long?" We'll read of Rudd posing the same question again later, related to other issues, such as lynching. What is this prayer that he is invoking—where have you heard it before? Why is Rudd's reference to it particularly apt?
4. We read in this chapter of the success of the separate coach laws in many states and the *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling. Is Daniel Rudd's persistent faith in America's noble ideals justified?
5. Agee notes that Rudd's support of new immigrants to the United States set him apart from many other black Americans of his day. Why was Rudd's stance admirable for its consistency?

Chapter Six

1. In what way might one say that Rudd was an effective advocate and example of American entrepreneurialism?
2. Are you familiar with Pope Leo XIII's landmark 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, which Rudd found important enough to reprint in full in the *American Catholic Tribune*? What place does this encyclical have in the history of Catholic doctrine, and what makes it so relevant to the ideas that were most important to Daniel Rudd?
3. Are you aware of black leaders today who continue to articulate what might be recognized still as the "black Social Gospel"?
4. In what ways has the "New Civilization" to which Rudd looked forward been realized? In what ways hasn't it?
5. In what ways was Rudd correct to refer to lynching as "the most horrid spectre of the present century"? (Are you familiar with theologian James Cone's important 2013 book *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*?)
6. In several places in Agee's account of Rudd's life, we find instances in which Rudd encountered failure, disappointment, or rejection of the ideas he advocated. How do we see that in this chapter, and what does it say about Rudd?

Chapter Seven

1. Rudd wrote that America is as full of examples of injustice “as a hill is of ants” (and then went on to identify several such examples). Can the same be said today? How so?
2. Were you aware of Pope Gregory’s 1839 condemnation of the slave trade? What would this have meant to the reality of being American and Catholic in the mid-nineteenth century?
3. What examples do we see in this chapter of people’s convictions being shaped by the mores of their times in ways that seem clearly outdated and mistaken today? What does this suggest about what might be the nature of our own convictions on moral and social questions? Can we hope to distinguish between authentic moral truth and time-bound social mores in the context of our own times?
4. One interesting aspect of Rudd’s work that this chapter brings out is his efforts to be consistent in his stance in favor of the equal rights and dignity of all. How is similar consistency a challenge today?

Chapter Eight

1. What makes Daniel Rudd an inspiring figure not only as a black Catholic but as a *lay* Catholic? How was he a bit ahead of his time as a layperson in the Church?
2. Cardinal Gibbons, in his sermon at the first Colored Catholic Congress, pointed to Jesus as having broken down the walls which separate people, making all humanity one family (a reference to Ephesians 2:14). In what ways might we recognize Jesus as the ultimate reason and the support for racial equality?
3. How does Fr. Mackey's position on the "amalgamation" of races—which was, in the context of his time and in his intention, more repressive and less progressive than the position of Rudd and many of those allied with him in the pursuit of racial justice—now seem in some ways more progressive and worthwhile?
4. In what ways do you see today calls for "moderation" (as Archbishop John Ryan encouraged the participants in the 1892 Colored Catholic Congress to proceed in their work) in the pursuit of righteous causes in the Church or society? In what ways might these calls be considered well intentioned and wise? In what ways are they problematic?

Chapter Nine

1. Agee points out that as Rudd got older, American society regressed in many ways with regard to racial equality. What must this have meant for Rudd to observe these developments?
2. Are you familiar with the 1984 pastoral letter by the black bishops of the United States, *What We Have Seen and Heard*? What would Rudd have thought of the priority it gives to evangelization? (A more recent document of the U.S. bishops that you may wish to read—released about a year after the publication of Agee’s *Daniel Rudd: Calling a Church to Justice*—is *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love—A Pastoral Letter against Racism*.)
3. Have you participated in any of the National Black Catholic Congress events held every five years since 1987? What has been your experience of them, or what have you heard about them?
4. The 2017 National Black Catholic Congress gathering—with its theme “The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me: Act Justly, Love Goodness, and Walk Humbly with Your God”—happened after this Rudd biography was written and published. Did you hear anything about it happening at the time? Did you participate? You may wish to review the texts, photos, and videos of the event available on the NBCC website, <https://www.nbcccongress.org/congress-xii.html>. Also well worth seeing at that site is the specially commissioned congress mural, which includes Daniel Rudd among its images of many people important in the history of black Catholics in the United States.

5. What are the greatest challenges facing black Catholics as members of the Church today? As members of society? How might the Church more effectively welcome black people, and how would the entire Body of Christ benefit if it did?