

The *SBJT* Forum: Racism, Scripture, and History

Editor's Note: Readers should be aware of the forum's format. D. A. Carson, J. Daniel Hays, Paige Patterson, Ken Fentress, Michael A. G. Haykin, Anthony Carter and A. B. Caneday have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses. These writers are not responding to one another. The journal's goal for the Forum is to provide significant thinkers' views on topics of interest without requiring lengthy articles from these heavily-committed individuals. Their answers are presented in an order that hopefully makes the forum read as much like a unified presentation as possible.

SBJT: In your book *Love in Hard Places* you gave us some reflections on racism. Summarize some of the more uncomfortable thoughts that spring to your mind when you think about this subject.

D. A. Carson: Different people will find different things uncomfortable. In no particular order of importance, the following items would certainly be included in the list of many thoughtful Christians.

(1) In North America, racism is commonly associated with Black/White relations. World wide, however, racism has many permutations. By and large, the Japanese look down on Koreans; by and large, the Chinese look down on both of them; and the tribalism that is never too far from the surface of many African nations is, from one perspective, yet another form of racism. Indeed, where racism ends and resentment caused by differences in ethnicity begins is part of the difficulty of thinking clearly about this subject. Anti-semitism, for instance, can be interpreted as a species of racism ("Aryan supremacy"), yet it is commonly intertwined with ideology (e.g. Nazism) or even with aberrant theology (e.g. "God-killers"), and almost always with stereotypes (e.g. hook-nosed, unscrupulous

moneybags) and deep suspicion of the "other," whatever the "other" is (in this case, stereotypes of yarmulkes, men with black hats and curls, Sabbath observance, and much more of the same). To think clearly and penetratingly about racism is immensely challenging.

(2) In the American context, it is difficult to disentangle racism from the history of slavery. But some brute facts cannot be avoided.

First, until the beginning of the nineteenth century slavery was a phenomenon found in virtually every major world culture. Hittites had slaves, the Chinese had slaves, ancient Israelites had slaves, dominant African tribes and empires had slaves, the Greeks had slaves, the Romans had slaves, and so forth. Not for a moment does this excuse the barbarism of the institution. Indeed, its essential barbarism is precisely why Old Testament legislation sought to limit it (with the Year of Jubilee) and mitigate its damage (with codification of various laws). Nevertheless, one should remember that during the period in which approximately eleven million Africans were shipped across the Atlantic as slaves (many not making it across: the conditions on the boats were inhuman),

D. A. Carson is Research Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He is the author of numerous commentaries and monographs, and is one of this country's foremost New Testament scholars. Among his many books are *Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility* (John Knox Press, 1981; reprint, Baker, 1994), *The Gagging of God: Christianity Confronts Pluralism* (Zondervan, 1996), and *Love in Hard Places* (Crossway, 2002).

approximately thirteen million Africans were shipped north as slaves, often up the Arabian Gulf, to Arab and North African states.

Second, one of the distinctives of American slavery (as opposed to, say, ancient Roman slavery) was that it was tied to blackness, to Africans. In the Roman Empire, there were African slaves, of course—but there were also Jewish slaves, Syrian slaves, Cilician Slaves, English slaves, Italian slaves. People sometimes became slaves out of bankruptcy, so there was no bar on race. On the other hand, there were also people from all of these backgrounds who were well-to-do, or noble, or at least free. Thus there was no necessary cultural association between slavery and one particular race. In the American experience, however, only Africans were slaves, and, at least initially, virtually all Africans were slaves.

The result is a residue not easy to measure, but deeply ingrained in our cultural self-perceptions. Racism can be found in our attitudes toward other immigrant groups, of course (hence expressions like “wops,” “chinks,” “slant-eyes,” etc.), but only African Americans were slaves, not European Americans. The inevitable result is twofold: on the one hand, there is long-persisting and scarcely-admitted assumption among many, many, non-African Americans that African Americans are inferior, along with some unvoiced assumptions that “they” should grow up and get over it; and, on the other, there is a long-standing fear among African Americans that they just might be inferior, or, at least as bad, that other Americans might *think* them to be inferior, so that they can never measure up. Add to this cultural mix a lot of Jim Crow laws within living memory, and Jim Crow attitudes even

when the laws have been overturned, and we instantly see that we have a long way to go.

Third, this history accounts for the fact that many African Americans have a different definition of racism from that of European-Americans. The latter assume that negative bias toward another race, whether in thought or deed, is racism; the former assume that negative bias toward another race, whether in thought or deed, *plus power*, is racism. That means that if African Americans indulge in nasty stereotypes of European-Americans, or for that matter specifically of, say, Jews, or of Asian-Americans, they do not perceive themselves to be racists, because they do not have the power. By this definition, most Whites are racists; Blacks are not, by definition. This is one of the legacies of slavery. From the point of view of many Blacks, if Whites prefer their own company and entertain stereotypes of Blacks, it’s racism; if Blacks prefer their own company and entertain stereotypes of Whites, it’s both understandable and deserved. But on this point, we are not going to make any headway until all of us face up to the ease with which suspicion of the other, not least in the matter of race, contaminates all of us.

(3) We cannot avoid facing up to the fact that in Great Britain, the strongest Christian voices at the beginning of the nineteenth century were at the forefront of the fight to end slavery, but in this country very often the strongest Christian voices were at the forefront of the fight to preserve it. Yes, I know, the situation was more complex than that. In Britain, countless tens of thousands of Christians within the Anglican Church were most reluctant to end slavery in the British Empire. Nevertheless, the Methodists,

fired up by the preaching of the Wesleys, Whitefield, Harris, and their heirs and successors, fomented a social revolution that transformed much of the social structure, and part of that transformation was the abolition of slavery. The result was that in the minds of countless observers, virulent Christianity was associated with the *front* end of healthy social change. The slave trade across the Atlantic was largely stopped, long before the Civil War, by British gunboats (as they also stopped the trade in the Arabian Gulf), once the Empire had adopted its abolitionist stance. But here, however complicated the factors (e.g. debates over states rights), the fact of the matter is that the area of the country with the strongest percentage of articulate Christian voices left the perception in the eyes of many that Christianity is to be associated with the *back* end of healthy social change. We have not exhausted that legacy. To this day, the parts of the country that have the highest number of Christians are the parts of the country still most segregated. I have visited numerous astonishingly integrated churches (integrated, that is, both with respect to the membership and with respect to the staff) on the coasts, but far fewer in the more “conservative” and “Christian” parts of the country. It is difficult to avoid the impression that improvements in the arena of racism are not, by and large, being led by Christians (with some notable exceptions, of course), but by others, whom we end up following. Yes, I know that nasty PC (= political correctness) factors rear their ugly head. But after we have introduced all the footnotes we might wish, the patterns of improvement, or lack of improvement, around the country, speak with terrible clarity.

(4) It is often said that in America 11:00

a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour every week. That may be the case. But there are many anomalies to the situation. If European-Americans tend to gather in monochrome churches, so also do African Americans—and so also do most Asian-Americans (or, more precisely, there tend to be Korean-American churches, Chinese-American churches, Vietnamese-American churches, and so forth). Some of this is merely the pattern of immigrant groups: when German Baptists came over, they started German-language churches, wanted their kids to marry German Baptists, and so forth—and similarly Swedish Baptists, Norwegian Lutherans, and so forth). By the second, third, and fourth generations, the European immigrants tended to become more integrated with the broader culture; the jury is out as to whether this will happen as extensively with Asian Americans. I know more than a few Chinese-American churches with third- and fourth-generation Chinese American members, where the largest congregations are in English, but where there are scarcely any European-American or African American members. Are they racist? Very often the first generation of any immigrant group wants the children to marry others within that immigrant group. But by the fourth generation, what is going on when the same exclusivism still pertains? Or is this merely a question of people with shared outlook and inherited culture preferring to be with others of the same heritage, without despising those of other heritages? And then we must ask, of course, at what point a similar generosity of spirit may legitimately apply to Black or White congregations? It is extraordinarily difficult not to maintain a double standard here—yet perhaps a double standard is

in some measure needed, because only one “immigrant” group was subjected to slavery. (The indentured labor of some workers, both European and Chinese, as brutal as it sometimes was, nevertheless falls into a different class than slavery, from which there was no reprieve.) Nevertheless, far more hard thinking needs to be done in this area than has been done so far.

(5) Yet there is at least something to be said for targeting particular groups as groups. I know a church in Sydney, Australia, which has begun a Greek outreach (for Greek immigrants), a Mandarin outreach (for Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrants), a Cantonese outreach (similarly), a Korean outreach, and so forth. These Bible-studies-cum-house-groups eventually become congregation-size. Yet a concerted effort is made, not least by the leadership of each group but also by the leadership of the whole, to foster more and more mixing as people grow up in Christ. What that strategy might look like in any subculture will vary a great deal, but surely it ought to be something toward which we press. The goals of evangelism demand that we become “all things to all people so that by all means we may win some” (1 Corinthians 9), which presupposes that we recognize difference; the goals of church unity presuppose that we recognize *in practice* and not just in theory that the church is the *one* new humanity in which old barriers have been torn down (Ephesians 2). We are to be an outpost of heaven, where one day we will find gathered around the throne men and women from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. Let that witness make its own contribution to the truth taught by the Master himself, that people will know we are his disciples if

we love one another (John 13:34-35). The steps we might take to help bring this about will vary enormously in different parts of the country. Certainly we are not to blow everything up and call it faithfulness. But we must be doing *something*, with deep intentionality, or we will achieve nothing more than what is already being done by the changing tides of history and the pressures of pluralism. We will be mere culture-followers. And where is the Christian witness in that?

(6) Does one have to say that the old “curse of Ham” theory is still embraced by some ignorant people whose exegesis of Scripture leaves a great deal to be desired? An excellent antidote is found in a volume I included in the NSBT series, viz. J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003).

(7) I suspect that the real proof of being entirely free from racial prejudice does not take place when one has cut out scurrilous language, or when one can boast of having a few friends who belong to the “them” group (whatever group is referred to by “them”), or when one manages to survive the annual pastor-swap (Black pastor in White church, and vice-versa). It takes place when European Americans and African Americans disagree with each other, or razz each other, and *never* have to be “careful” about what is said for fear of racially hurt feelings. It occurs when, after a White man has been mugged by a Black man, the former automatically thinks of the latter as a thug, a nasty mugger, not as a Black thug. It occurs when a Black person, harassed by a White civil servant, does not chalk up the institutional rudeness to whiteness and condescension, but to rudeness and incivility. It occurs when we applaud the triumphs of someone very

different, and refrain *even from thinking* that the triumphs are not bad considering the person is Black, or that the triumphs are only to be expected, considering that the person had all the advantages of being White.

We have a long, long, way to go. The fact that there is no utopian fix until Jesus comes back does not warrant cynicism or want of effort. Even now, we gather in the heavenly Jerusalem around the throne of God (Hebrews 12), and we recognize how all that we have received, both in this life and in the next, flows from grace, and so we see ourselves as debtors. We recognize the bleak sinfulness of our own hearts apart from grace, and we hunger to edify brothers and sisters in Christ, regardless of background, education, race, or ethnicity. In small but significant ways, we take steps to bring about at least partial reality of the triumph that will be transparent in a new heaven and a new earth: the glory of redeemed men and women drawn from every tongue and tribe and people and nation, singing praise to him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.

SBJT: What is the biblical view towards inter-racial marriage?

J. Daniel Hays: Although progress toward overcoming racial division has been achieved in several areas in the last 40 years, many in White churches continue to voice strong opposition against inter-racial or inter-ethnic marriages. Youth ministers who successfully bring in a diversity of young people into their programs frequently run into trouble once kids of different colors start to date. Rather than being commended for their successful outreach, these youth ministers often see their ministry (and their jobs) challenged by stalwart members of the

church. Many faithful and active Southern Baptists are still strongly—indeed, almost violently—opposed to inter-racial marriages, especially between Blacks and Whites.

However, the inter-racial marriage issue lies at the very heart of racial prejudice. The historian Elizabeth Isichei writes, “Inter-ethnic marriage is the litmus test of racial prejudice.” Many of our church members would affirm racial equality and view themselves as being accepting of other races. They would not consider themselves as being prejudiced or racist at all. However, many of these same Christians strongly oppose the marriage of anyone in their family to someone of another race or ethnicity. They often assume that the Bible supports them on this. But does the Bible actually oppose inter-racial marriage? What is the biblical view towards inter-racial or inter-ethnic marriage?

One of the central texts that can help us to develop a biblical perspective on this issue is Numbers 12:1, which states, “Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite.” Who is this woman? What is the significance of stating that she is a Cushite?

Cush is a fairly common term in Egyptian literature. It also appears over fifty times in the Old Testament, and is attested in Assyrian literature as well. It is used regularly to refer to the area south of Egypt, above the cataracts on the Nile, where a Black African civilization flourished for over 2000 years. Likewise we have an abundance of Egyptian art that portrays the Cushites consistently as dark-skinned people with Negroid features. Thus it is quite clear that Moses married a Black African woman.

J. Daniel Hays is a former missionary to Ethiopia and is currently the Chair of the Department of Biblical Studies at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. He received his Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary and his Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Hays is the author of numerous books and articles, including *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (InterVarsity Press, 2003).

Several older commentators, however, perhaps uncomfortable with this marriage, argue that this woman was not a Black Cushite from the country south of Egypt, but rather an Arabic-looking Midianite (Moses marries a Midianite named Zipporah back in Exodus 2). Martin Noth, for example, in the Old Testament Library commentary on Numbers, presents the standard argument by citing Habakkuk 3:7, where the term “Cushan” is used in parallel with Midian. From this reference in Habakkuk, Noth (and others) conclude that there was a group in Arabia known as Cushites that were related to or identical to the Midianites. Several writers also conclude that since this is a reference to Midianites, the woman in question must be Zipporah. Noth states that the term Cushite in this text cannot possibly refer to the region south of Egypt because that area is too far removed from Moses’ activity.

However, Noth’s arguments are weak and outdated, reflecting a very limited understanding of the situation in Egypt. During the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Dynasties of Egypt, relations between Egypt and Cush were extremely close. Cush was under direct Egyptian control; indeed, it was practically part of Egypt. There were thousands of Cushites in Egypt at all levels of society. If Moses was born and raised in Egypt, it is not only possible, but almost certain, that he would have known numerous Cushites in his youth. Noth’s statement that the African Cushites were too far removed from Moses’ activity reflects a serious misunderstanding on Noth’s part regarding the extent to which Cushites permeated Egyptian society. Furthermore, Exodus 12:38 states that “many other people” came out of Egypt with the sons of Israel.

The implication is, of course, that these were other nationalities, reflecting the ethnic makeup of Egypt. It is very likely that there were Cushites in this group as well. So, the Cushite woman of Numbers 12:1 could have been either one that Moses knew in his youth or one that he met as the Exodus began.

Likewise, the argument from Habakkuk 3:7 does nothing to alter the normal meaning of the term “Cush.” The text in Habakkuk 3:7 does not read “Cush” but rather “Cushan.” “Cush” and “Cushan” are not necessarily the same word. Cush occurs dozens of times in the Old Testament, clearly as a reference to the civilization south of Egypt. “Cushan” occurs only once, in Habakkuk 3:7, and the reference is somewhat enigmatic. There should be overwhelming evidence before a common, normal usage of a word is rejected in favor of a poorly attested usage. Furthermore, throughout the Old Testament the term “Cush” is associated closely with Egypt.

A modern example might help to put the passage in perspective. Suppose a man was born and raised in Texas. Later in life he was traveling north with a large ethnically “mixed” group from Texas. While the group was passing through Iowa the man marries a Mexican woman. Would any reader of this story today question the meaning of the term “Mexican”? Would we try to find some vague semantic connection with a locale in Iowa so we could assert that the woman has blond hair and blue eyes? Of course not. Because Mexico borders Texas, and because there are millions of ethnic Mexicans in Texas, the meaning of the term “Mexican” in regard to this man’s wife is obvious. The meaning of “Cushite” in Numbers 12 is just as obvious, and for the same reasons.

Yet what of the biblical injunctions

against intermarriage? Has Moses violated these injunctions? Not at all. First observe that in the Torah (see especially Deut 7:1-4 and Exod 34:11-16) the prohibition against intermarriage is always strictly in regard to *the inhabitants of Canaan* and not to foreigners in general. Second, the reason given for this prohibition is always theological—the inhabitants worship other gods and intermarrying with them would inevitably lead to the apostasy of God’s people.

Underscoring this distinction is Deuteronomy 21:10-14. This passage comes within a section that deals with conquering cities outside of the Promised Land and explains the procedure for taking *foreign* captured women from these cities as wives. Thus in this case, i.e. in conquests outside the Promised Land, intermarriage with foreigners was clearly permitted.

The limitation of the ban on intermarriage to apply only to the inhabitants of Canaan is consistent for early Israel. Furthermore the reason—a theological one—is always clearly stated. This reason has absolutely nothing to do with race or physical appearance. Note that Israel is specifically forbidden to intermarry with the Canaanites, who are the very people most closely related to them ethnically. They *are* allowed to intermarry with other foreigners as Deuteronomy 21:10-14 and Numbers 12:1 illustrate. The foreigners that they are allowed to marry are much more racially different than those whom they are prohibited from marrying. Obviously racial difference is not the issue. Faith and theology is.

Thus Moses’ marriage to a Black woman from Cush did not violate any biblical prohibition. Consistently throughout Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testaments, the prohibition is against

marrying outside the faith, not against marrying someone of another race.

The theological implications of Numbers 12:1 are significant. Moses is not a minor, backwater biblical character. He is a gigantic character in the biblical story and one of the central servants of God in the Bible. This event occurs, not while he is running away from God or while he is disobeying God, but while he is obviously walking close with God. Furthermore, God affirms Moses’ marriage to the Cushite woman, and punishes Miriam for her opposition to that inter-racial marriage (Num 12:4-15).

So what theological conclusions should we draw from this text? *I would suggest that interracial intermarriage is strongly affirmed by Scripture.* The criteria for approving or disapproving of our children’s selected spouses should be based on their faith in Christ and not at all on the color of their skin. This theological affirmation should have profound implications for the church today. White families frequently rise up in arms when their children want to marry Blacks, regardless of how strong their Christian faith is. On the other hand, White Christian young adults can marry other Whites with little opposition even if the faith of their selected mate is virtually non-existent. Such behavior reflects the church’s weak theological understanding of Scripture on this subject.

The theology derived from the marriage of Moses to a Black woman corresponds well with the rest of biblical theology. Genesis 1 teaches us that all people are created in the image of God and have equal status before God. Paul tells us in the New Testament that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile but that *all* Christians are brothers and sisters in the family of God. Marrying outside the

family is forbidden, but the clear biblical definition of family is based on faith in Christ and not on race or descent. Interracial marriage between Christians is clearly supported by Scripture.

SBJT: Does the Bible address racism?

Paige Patterson: Although seldom noticed, one small verse that appears in the earliest history of Genesis disallows racism as an acceptable posture for any thoughtful evangelical. Genesis 3:20 chronicles the naming of Adam's newly created wife and extension of himself, noting that "Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Tragically, evangelicals have often lagged behind their more liberal counterparts in proclaiming racism and all its accouterments to be sin—sin, in fact, of a most wretched variety. Thankfully, many evangelicals, among them many Southern Baptists, have acknowledged the sins of the past and charted a determined course of theological, ecclesiastical, and sociological amendment. Those who fly the flag of confidence in the inerrancy of Holy Scripture should have been leading the parade, based not only on Genesis 3:20 but also on the consistent witness of God's word regarding all humans as the bearers of the *imago dei* ("image of God") regardless of ethnic derivation or the level of melanin found in one's skin.

The argument is really quite simple. If Eve is the mother of all living, then there are only four possibilities. One could broach the idea that God later created another race of humans unrelated to Eve's descendents. No shred of biblical evidence even hints at such a possibility, and the Human Genome project appears to have succeeded in establishing unimpeachable evidence for uniquely compatible DNA in

all living humans.

Another possibility would be that evolution is credible after all. Employing some nuanced form of Stephen J. Gould's "punctuated equilibrium," one might risk the possible suggestion that two or more separate evolutionary tracks are forthcoming. Oh, my! One hardly needs to be a chess champion to figure out where racists will take that view both politically and sociologically. Besides, if creation is thought to belong to the genre of "miracle," what should be concluded about two or more lines of evolving DNA, which somehow end up with such startling commonality as to be indistinguishable? Clearly, all humans have—well, human DNA!

What about the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men?" Here, according to some, is a hybrid race, a new development that is half demon, half human. Here is Rosemary's Baby writ large. Not for a minute do I subscribe to such mythology, but many well-meaning and reasonably well-informed theologians do have stock in such a view. Even if someone embraces such a view, is it not the case that a part of the reason for the deluge, according to that view, was the elimination of the Nephilim? Surely no one has advocated that Ham, Shem, Japheth, or their spouses were half-aliens sheltered by God through the flood.

A Bible-believing Christian is left with only one real possibility: Eve is the mother of all living. This means that since Adam seems to have been the only possible father available, Palestinians, Jews, Bantus, Asians, Latinos, Anglos and all the rest, in the broad general sense, are brothers and sisters. At least we all belong to the same family, even though we appear to act as a highly dysfunctional family much of

Paige Patterson is President of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He has also served as President of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and The Criswell College in Dallas, Texas. In addition to his role as seminary president and professor, Dr. Patterson has authored numerous articles and books and is a popular preacher and speaker.

the time. Confirmation of all this comes from geneticists such as Rebecca Cann, whose extensive research led her to the astonishing conclusion that all humans living on the earth today descended from a common ancestor who lived somewhere in North Africa or the Middle East just a few hundred thousand years ago!¹ What you just heard popping were thousands of Tylenol bottle caps being hurriedly grasped by panicked paleontologists!

The issue, therefore, is settled for any genuine advocate of biblical inerrancy. There is only one race of humans, and all of us belong to that race. Ethnicities and dominant physical characteristics have developed in time, but God meant these features to add interest, color, fascination, enjoyment, and mutual cerebral stimulation each for the other. Never did God purpose to send us cowering into our own ethnic ghettos from which we would then launch invective and, all too frequently, “rocket-propelled grenades” or worse at one another.

As a scuba diver, I never cease to marvel at the almost infinite variety of fish, sharks, coral, and other sea-life created by God. What an imagination he has! The colors so variegated and perfectly blended—there was never an accomplished artist who could dream of producing such a seascape. All of this God has done apparently for his own enjoyment as well as for ours. If he accomplishes such aesthetic beauty and symmetry with sea-life, how much more should we recognize and rejoice in the realization of the artistry of God in every human conceived.

Simon Peter had to arrive at all this the hard way. I have an idea that at least some of the critters he ogled in that sheet on the rooftop of Simon the Tanner probably left Peter suspecting that Simon had tanned

the hides of some grossly unappetizing potential meals. But, Peter finally got the point and observed, “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him” (Acts 10:34-35).

Arguments against racism have proceeded along the lines of jurisprudence, legislation, morality, equal opportunity, freedom, and so on, and there is truth in them all. Justice is essential to any functional social order. Laws will need to be codified. Morality must be championed, and all must have liberty and opportunity. But, why is all of the above the case?

If God has spoken, then one must heed what he says. For evangelical believers, the authority of the Bible must remain unassailable and undebatable. We must applaud those who make other kinds of telling arguments against racism and join the chorus in at least a thirty-fold “Amen.” But, the time has come for evangelicals to bring the mother load, if you will forgive the pun. If we believe the Book, let us appeal to its lucid position on race and say to all of the tribes of the earth, “Eve is the mother of all living.” That, in effect, settles the issue!

ENDNOTES

¹Rebecca L. Cann, et al., “Mitochondria DNA and Human Evolution,” *Nature* 325 (January 1, 1987), 31-36, cited in Charles E. Warren, *Original Sin Explained?* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2002), 78-80.

SBJT: Recently you were appointed as Dean of Intercultural Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Briefly outline the purpose and goals of this new position.

Ken Fentress: The position of Dean of Intercultural Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has been established for the purpose of developing initiatives designed to help fulfill the New Testament vision of racial reconciliation at the academic, denominational, and congregational levels. Southern Seminary is seeking to model for our denomination and for the church what it means to reach out to persons of all racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This initiative will seek to apply the principles of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20, recognizing that issues of racial and cultural diversity are of significant importance to the church in the twenty-first century.

The Great Commission calls for us to go and make new disciples of Jesus Christ. This mandate requires the church to be intentional about overcoming the racial barriers that have been the source of division and segregation in the Christian community (Ephesians 2:14-16). It is vital to work toward racial reconciliation because it is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ through which God reconciles people of all races to Himself. Reconciliation with God through Christ is the basis for racial reconciliation in the Christian community according to 1 John 1:7 and 4:20. The integrity of the gospel and the credibility of the church of the Lord Jesus are at stake in this issue. Our message of reconciliation will not be received if the church is not consistent in applying the biblical principle of racial reconciliation. The goal is to develop a new generation of racially diverse leaders who will be prepared to meet the challenges of twenty-first century Christian ministry with a biblically based theological perspective that will advance the Kingdom of God. In

Revelation 7:9, the Apostle John speaks of a vision in which he saw “a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language” represented at the throne of God. This vision is indicative of the sovereign purpose of God in which the church is to be made up of every race, culture, ethnicity, and linguistic background. It is important for the church of the twenty-first century to seek to model the diversity reflected in John’s vision of the throne of God. Through this new program, Southern Seminary is seeking to prepare students to minister in diverse racial and cultural contexts.

This is an institution-wide initiative. The first phase will involve analyzing existing seminary curricula to ensure that they are consistent with the biblical vision of racial reconciliation and the Great Commission. The Dean of Intercultural Studies will work with the deans of the seminary’s schools to assess the institution’s current and future needs in the areas of racial and cultural engagement, and make appropriate recommendations to the President and the Senior Vice President for Academic Administration.

Southern Seminary believes that now is the time for an initiative such as this. The twenty-first century context for ministry demands it. The church can no longer afford to neglect the important issue of racial reconciliation as a necessary application of the ministry and message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ; therefore, we should be reconciled to one another.

SBJT: How can the ancient church’s sense of identity help us deal with the issue of racism?

Ken Fentress is Assistant Professor of Old Testament Interpretation and Dean of Intercultural Studies at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received his Ph.D. from The Johns Hopkins University. Dr. Fentress has served as a pastor and has been a visiting professor of Old Testament at The Criswell College in Dallas, Texas; Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois; and Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama.

Michael A. G. Haykin: The ancient church saw herself as composing a new humanity—one not defined by ethnic or cultural parameters. In the words of Galatians, the church is a place of new creatures, “neither Jew nor Greek” (6:15; 3:28). Their identity was not to be found in their racial background or their cultural affinity. Rather, the new birth—entry into the family of God—made these things, which were so powerful in the first-century Mediterranean world, of little ultimate value. Thus Peter could describe Christians as “a holy nation, a people belonging to God” (1 Pet 2:9-10).

God’s clear *imprimatur* of the evangelization of Samaritans in Acts 8, for example, or the free offer of the gospel to Gentiles like the Roman centurion Cornelius (Acts 10-11) compelled early Christians to recognize that God meant their faith to be trans-ethnic and trans-cultural. As a result we see a definite attempt by the first-century church to tell all men and women in the Mediterranean world, regardless of their racial background, of the love of God. Paul’s apostolic passion to plant churches throughout the north-eastern quadrant of the Mediterranean and his desire to journey to Spain are further illustrations of this trans-racial impetus of the gospel (Rom 15:15-29).

These early believers thus found that their principal loyalty was not to their particular race or country, but to God and his multi-ethnic church. Their citizenship, they were well aware, was ultimately in heaven (Phil 3:20). This meant that while earthly loyalties to state and hearth were not to be utterly ignored, they no longer had ultimate sway over Christians. And it also meant that Christians had to view themselves as, in a real sense, “sojourners and exiles” (1 Pet 2:11).

In the anonymous *Letter to Diognetus*, a second-century apologetic pearl, the author put these key New Testament truths well when he wrote that

Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs that they observe. They neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life that is marked out by any particular singularity.... They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers (*Letter to Diognetus* 5).

Unfortunately by the fourth century these central Christian convictions were waning. The early Christian vision of the church as being drawn “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Rev 5:9) had been replaced in the minds of many by a perspective that saw the church as coterminous with the Roman Empire. For some professing Christians, like Eusebius of Caesarea (d. 339), the church historian, and Jerome (d. 420), the famous Bible translator, Christianity was now all but identical with *romanitas*, being Roman.

Over against this loss of the early Christian vision of a trans-racial church, though, is the shining witness of Patrick of Ireland (d. c.461). Patrick came from a wealthy Romano-British family who appear to have been nominal Christians. At the young age of sixteen, he was taken captive by the fearsome Irish, who had managed to stay outside of the boundaries of the Roman Empire and who were basically untouched by the gospel. Six years after being taken captive Patrick eventually escaped and returned home to

Michael A. G. Haykin is Principal of Toronto Baptist Seminary in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and a Senior Fellow of The Jonathan Edwards Centre for Reformed Spirituality. He also serves as Visiting Professor of Church History at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Toronto and is the editor of *Eusebeia: The Bulletin of the Jonathan Edwards Centre for Reformed Spirituality*.

his family in the former Roman province of Britannia (today modern England). By this time the Western Roman Empire was collapsing, and Roman rule in Britannia had ended.

Patrick became convinced through reading Scripture—especially those texts that dealt with the world-wide nature of the offer of the gospel—that he had to return to Ireland to preach Christ to the people of his former captors. His family—nominally Christian and proud of their *romanitas*—thought him mad for throwing away his life among such heathen. They were classic examples of professing Christians who believed that Christianity was primarily for their kith and kin and not for others of a different race, in this case the pagan Irish.

But Patrick, imbued with the early Christian love of the lost whatever their race, was not to be deterred. His subsequent mission to the Irish, which probably stretched from 440 to 461, was not without significant obstacles. However, it was successful beyond Patrick's wildest dreams. And his evangelization of Ireland stands, not only as a witness across the centuries of what mission should look like, but also as a powerful illustration of the ancient Christian conviction that faith in Christ nullifies racial pride.

SBJT: What do you mean when you say that you are Black, Reformed, and Christian?

Anthony Carter: Recently I did an interview on the subject of my book, *On Being Black and Reformed*. The initial question the interviewer posed to me was “Why did you write *On Being Black and Reformed*?” My answer was simply, “Because I am Black and Reformed.” The interviewer thought this a rather clever answer, yet

I thought it a merely obvious one. The truth, it seems, is so obvious to us at times that we often overlook it. Yet, since publishing the book, I am often faced with similar questions of the purpose and meaning behind my writings. I rejoice to tell people that I am a Christian, that I hold to Reformed Theology, and that my heritage is Black American. Each of these is according to the sovereign grace of God, to which I am the greatest of debtors. Yet, each could be explained further and put into its proper place. So then, what do I mean when I say that I am Black, Reformed, and Christian?

On Being Black

It means that I have a distinct, indeed unique, if at times bitter experience. It means that I have drunk of the waters of Marah in a land that has flowed with milk and honey. It means my forebears felt the lash of the whip and witnessed the horror of babies and loved ones cast down to the depths of unknown and untold graves in an angry deep. It means their sweat and blood were fertilizer for a land upon which they could only see but never own. It means being African American. It means having a face but often no name. It means having a home, but no country. It means having a voice to cry with, but not a voice to vote with. It means having to learn to sing a joyous song in a strange, foreign land. It means learning to live upon a God who is invisible and trusting his purposes though they seemingly ripen slowly.

On Being Reformed

It means that I have a heritage that transcends my skin. It means that the grace of God has appeared to me according to His good pleasure. It means I see my God as

Anthony Carter is the Assistant Pastor of Southwest Christian Fellowship in Atlanta, Georgia, a co-founder of the Black Alliance for Reformed Theology (BART), and the author of *On Being Black and Reformed: A New Perspective on the African-American Christian Experience* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 2003).

sovereign, omnipotent, holy, and right. It means I see my sin for what it is, heinous and worthy of death. And it means I see my Savior as all-sufficient, immutable, and altogether good. It means that my heroes are not only men like Frederick Douglas and Booker T. Washington, but they are also, and to some degree even more, Martin Luther and John Calvin. It means my legacy is seen from Lemuel Haynes to Langston Hughes. I have as much in common with Martin Luther as I do with Martin Luther King Jr. John Bunyan and John Marrant belong to me as much as do Abraham Kuyper and A. Philip Randolph. It means that I can look to J. Gresham Machen and listen to his ability to articulate the dangers of the sin of liberalism and yet question his inability to comprehend the dangers of the sin of racism. It means that I have solid, historical, and biblical grounds upon which to stand in this world, as I seek to be an instrument of God in spreading his righteousness, peace, and joy throughout the world. It means that my ideology is informed by my theology, which is Reformed, because what I am most of all is Christian.

On Being Christian

It means that I am a child of God first and foremost. It means when you see me, you see a Black man, but when you hear me you hear a Christian man. It means that Christ is my Lord. It means that I am daily seeking to understand my African American experience in light of the Lordship of Christ. It means that I am nothing apart from the grace of God, and that God has created me to be who I am at the time that I am that I might show forth His mercies while He is daily conforming me to the image of His dear Son. It means that my service, yes my

worship and allegiance, is not first to the Black cause, though noble it may be at times. It is not first to the Reformed cause though grand it may appear to be. It means that my service, indeed my worship and allegiance is to Christ first and last, now and at all times. If I can serve Christ while sincerely serving an African American cause, then let me do it. If I can serve Christ while promoting a Reformed agenda, then by all means let me at it. But if Christ is in conflict with any of these at any point or at any time, then let me have the courage, indeed the unction to say, "Away with blackness, and away with Reformedness – give me Jesus and Jesus only." It means that I must understand that Martin Luther King Jr. gave his life that I might vote, but Christ gave his life that I might live. Frederick Douglas gave his life that I might be free from slavery, but Christ gave his life that I might be free from slavery to sin and death.

I am Black; there is no mistaking that. I am Reformed, and make no mistake about that. But those two distinctions have relevance only in so far as they are understood in light of the fact that I am Christian. It was Spurgeon who said, "I am never ashamed to avow myself a Calvinist; I do not hesitate to take the name of Baptist; but if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, 'It is Jesus Christ.'" I am proud to be an American. I am equally proud to be an African American. I thank God that my theology is the biblically grounded, historically consistent theology of the Reformation. But if you ask me my faith, if you ask me my creed, if you want the sum of my life, "It is Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ." May it be yours as well.

SBJT: As a Christian educator who has addressed race issues on a college cam-

pus, what do you think Christians need to understand to address these issues biblically and effectively?

A. B. Caneday: “Racism” and “racialism” once referred to prejudice against another person based upon ethnic origin. Racial prejudice, which is one form of “respect of persons,” is condemned by Scripture as sin (James 2:1, 9). We who condemn racial prejudice as sin find ourselves, however, in a “brave new world” where therapeutic terminology and concepts displace scriptural categories. “Sensitivity training” now called “diversity training” has infiltrated public discourse with its imperialistic presumption that society is suffused with White supremacy that is viewed principally as a social-psychological dysfunction. This new ideology, called “multiculturalism,” reasons in this way: Members of the “majority culture,” including Christians, are infected with “racist or racialist tendencies” that, though occasionally manifesting themselves in overt instances of “racial injustice,” primarily show themselves in the perpetuation of “institutionalized racial discrimination” that continues to oppress “people of color.” Consequently, when Governor George W. Bush denounced the racially motivated brutal murder of James Byrd in Texas (June 7, 1998) as wicked and reprehensible, though expected in the court of public opinion, such denunciation could neither acquit Bush of presumed innate racism nor silence multiculturalists’ demands. They accused the Governor and the Texas justice system of racism for not prosecuting the murder as a “hate crime,” even though those who committed the murder face the death penalty.

Multiculturalism, which has long resided in liberal churches, sadly now infiltrates evangelical churches. Regretta-

bly, many in the church, especially preachers and Christian authors, have *uncritically* embraced multiculturalism and regularly use its rhetoric. Many evangelical pastors unwittingly now preach a new “social gospel” as they seek to appease the demands of secular multiculturalists. How did we get in this situation?

George Orwell’s *Newspeak* in 1984 endeavored to prevent people from thinking thoughts contrary to party approval by changing language. Today, *political correctness* is a sprawling speech code threatening people to think correctly by intimidating people to speak correctly. Enconced in their tenured chairs, political correctness academes have politicized virtually every aspect of life. Forbidden are ordinary words of description that might offend members of a “protected class” as determined by new religionists who legislate and enforce a new virtue while pretending to be religion-free or tolerant of all religions.

Political correctness is a virus. Intimidation carries this contagion from one individual to another as receiving hosts offer little resistance to the virus. Because the contagion exploits its host’s reluctance to offend the alleged sensibilities of hypersensitive people, political correctness seduces its host to accept the virus as newly acquired virtue to be passed on to others with religious zeal. Herein is the genius and power of political correctness. Once the host accepts political correctness as virtuous, external policing is rarely needed because the virus internally intimidates one’s conscience so that it becomes second nature to use newspeak and to chastise others who do not. Hence, the tyranny of political correctness: newspeak represents itself as virtue.

Political correctness apes good man-

A. B. Caneday is Professor of New Testament Studies and Biblical Theology at Northwestern College in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has written numerous articles and has co-authored (with Tom Schreiner) *The Race Set Before Us: A Biblical Theology of Perseverance and Assurance* (InterVarsity, 2001). As a student of politics and culture, Dr. Caneday is a leader at Northwestern College in critiquing multiculturalism, especially from Scripture.

ners we were taught as children while simultaneously making a virtue out of newspeak etiquette, seducing people into postmodern self-righteousness. For example, those who use newspeak regard themselves virtuous because they do not use the “n” word, but at the same time they express enraged contempt for Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, not only for his ideas and beliefs. With religious zeal they express intolerance and hatred for the man and for anyone who has high regard for this accomplished man and/or his ideas. This is so because, as political correctness (tolerance for ideas) increases, civility of speech (tolerance for people) diminishes. Tolerance toward people with whom we disagree, perhaps even vigorously, has been replaced in the public square with tolerance for ideas—except, ironically, for ideas that crowd out competing ideas with claims of truthfulness. With this inversion of virtue, then, anyone who does not tolerate ideas and beliefs that formerly were universally condemned stands condemned as intolerant, while anyone who does not tolerate such people but tolerates formerly rejected ideas and beliefs stands acquitted in the public square.

Regrettably, many evangelicals are conforming to this age as they accommodate to the world’s culture. Multiculturalism’s new virtue of tolerance has found its place in the church, ensconcing itself in both the pulpit and the pew. Within the church the Christian grace of *forbearance toward people* has been replaced with *tolerance for ideas*. It is not surprising, then, that virtue, as the world measures goodness, has crept into the church to wield its tyranny. One way this new virtue of tolerance for ideas makes its presence known in the church is with new vocabulary, such as

“institutional racism,” “historical sins,” “social sins,” “social justice,” “racial reconciliation,” and other expressions borrowed from secular multiculturalists but baptized for Christian use. Christian political correctness emboldens its practitioners to chastise anyone who questions the legitimacy of this new vocabulary or defends the propriety of using biblical imagery such as darkness or blackness to represent sin and evil in contrast to light or white to symbolize goodness and righteousness. Because some with dark skin may take offense at this symbolism, following Amoja Three-Rivers’s *Cultural Etiquette*, some Christian multiculturalists actually label use of such biblical imagery as *racist*.

Within evangelicalism, Christian colleges have taken the lead in conforming to this age as they promote multiculturalism. Fashionably late as usual, evangelicals began organized efforts to get in step with popular culture concerning “race relations” during the last decade. Though a chasm between the academy and the church may exist, with rare exceptions the academy effects change upon the church rather than vice versa. Christian academics, derelict in critiquing the advancement of the philosophy of “multiculturalism” that was shaping policies at non-religious universities and colleges, rather uncritically baptized the philosophy and put it to work at colleges then associated with the Coalition of Christian Colleges in 1991 by establishing the Racial/Ethnic Diversity Initiative. Chief among the arguments borrowed from secular multiculturalists and race experts was the claim that “Coalition schools failed to mirror the ethnic diversity of the surrounding culture” (James A. Patterson, *Shining Lights: A History of the Council for Christian Col-*

leges & Universities [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], 93).

This initiative made its way to the college where I teach. More than a decade ago, a well-known Black minister, claiming to have a “ministry of reconciliation” based on 2 Corinthians 5:18, instead incited hostility and division among us for three days as he berated board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students for being members of a “racist institution.” He asserted four things: (1) that the college did not proportionately represent its surrounding population, (2) that the reason for this was “institutional racism” that excluded “people of color,” whether intentionally or not, (3) only Whites, not Blacks, can be racists because they possess power, and (4) members of the college need to repent and work to make the institution look like what God’s people will in the eternal kingdom, using Revelation 5:9-10. Only then would “racial reconciliation” begin. Few dared to whisper disagreement with the minister’s scathing reprimands or challenge his “ministry of reconciliation.”

Political correctness began to prevail on our college campus, and “evangelical newspeak” began to displace biblical vocabulary. Fortunately multiculturalism’s advances on our campus have encountered principled individuals who critique it with Scripture. These individuals successfully terminated the adoption of a multiculturalist “Diversity Statement” and won approval for a biblically-based statement. Nevertheless, multiculturalism persists, invigorated by the recent “Intercultural Competencies” initiative of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU).

As the last decade progressed, “evangelical newspeak” spread rapidly from

Christian colleges to seminaries and to churches. Now churches have “Committees for Racial Reconciliation,” and with religious fervor preachers advocate “diversity,” “social justice,” and “racial reconciliation” without examining or defining these expressions. Now a plethora of essays and books reinforce evangelical newspeak. This infiltration of political correctness into the church with its new virtue and new vocabulary has come about because of failure to recognize and to assess their worldly and collectivist origins. This new social gospel with its pernicious virtue forces itself upon people by exploiting fear of humans and fabricated “group guilt.” Anyone who calls for caution and biblical assessment of these ideas often suffers rebuke, ostracism, and charges of racism.

Further evidence of the danger of evangelicals conforming to this age is the misuse of Scripture by evangelicals who advance this cause on Christian colleges and in churches. For example, Scripture is mishandled in order to advocate a collectivist view of sin and advance the demand for a collective confession of racism due to a collective guilt for the sins of our forefathers that requires a collective reconciliation of White people to “people of color.” Thus, it has become commonplace for evangelical multiculturalists to exploit abbreviated quotations of Exodus 20:5 and Jeremiah 32:18. In this regard, the Racial Harmony Council of the CCCU abbreviates quotations of both passages: “I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation. . .” (Ex 20:5), and “You . . . bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them” (Jer 32:18). The Racial Harmony Council of the CCCU

concludes,

Majority culture Christians today are the “children” on whom the sins of unequal treatment of minorities by the “fathers” are being visited. The Biblical call is for all parties in majority and minority cultures to deal consciously, courageously, intelligently, affirmatively and lovingly with the effects of those sins which the fathers have placed in their laps. It will not do for Christians in our colleges and universities to say, “Look, I had nothing to do with the past wrongs done minorities by my ancestors. Nor have I done any wrong, denied anyone in any race any opportunities to achieve in America. So, let’s forget the past and just move on as equals living in today’s society.” Such an individualistic response fails to see the collective nature of human life which the Scriptures teach (“Affirmative Action and Racial Harmony in Christian Colleges: A Discussion Paper and Recommendations by the Racial Harmony Council” CCCU).

Assuming, without demonstration, the soundness of this reasoning, sociologist Michael Emerson argues that “whites, the main creators and benefactors of the racialized society, must repent of their personal, historical, and social sins. If historical and social sins are not confessed and overcome, they are passed on to future generations, perpetuating the racialized system, and perpetuating sin” (*Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* [Oxford: University Press, 2000], 55).

If we Christians are to obey Scripture’s command not to be conformed to this world we need both to understand and critique multiculturalism, biblically. We need to understand that we cannot baptize aspects of multiculturalism for the church. We need to know how and why multiculturalists, who boast of their tolerance, have little tolerance for Christians or

for the gospel. Furthermore, as we critique multiculturalism in general, we also need to show how evangelical multiculturalists misuse Scripture as they seek to give biblical warrant for their agenda.

In regard to this latter concern, we have to question evangelical multiculturalists’ interpretation and employment of Exodus 20:5 and Jeremiah 32:18. Sadly these texts are taken out of context and thus improperly applied. Exodus 20:5-6 contains the Second Commandment: “You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” Contrary to popular use, the passage does not support the notion that God punishes believing descendants for the sins of their ungodly forefathers. Instead, the text says that God’s punishment falls upon those who hate him, but God shows love to those who love him and keep his commandments. Jeremiah 32:18 expresses the same contrasting promise and threat: “You show love to thousands but bring the punishment for the fathers’ sins into the laps of their children after them.” In fact, through his prophet Ezekiel, the Lord corrects the error that both the Israelites and evangelical multiculturalists have embraced:

“What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel: ‘The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’? As surely as I live,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die” (Ezekiel 18:1-4).

Because the Israelites had wrongly understood God's covenant promise and threat, thinking themselves innocent, they developed the proverb, "The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." They meant that the fathers commit the sins but the children bear God's punishment for those sins. This is the error of evangelical multiculturalists who want the Bible to support the collectivist ideas they advocate. God's Word rebukes them: "The person who sins is the person who will bear God's punishment for sin."

In addition, evangelical multiculturalists' misuse of these Bible passages also betrays a civil-religious application of the Mosaic covenant to our nation. God established a covenant with the nation of Israel, a disobedient people, so that as her kings behaved, so the Lord blessed or cursed the nation. Christ Jesus brought the old covenant to its fulfillment and termination (Ephesians 2:11-16) and established the new covenant, not with a nation but with "one new man," the church. This covenant people of the new creation, unlike the old, knows no ethnicity, for "herein there is not Greek and Jew" (Colossians 3:11). The new covenant in Christ Jesus established "the unity of the Spirit with the bond that consists of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). God does not call upon us to establish "racial harmony" through a secular multiculturalist agenda, baptized with Scripture. Sadly, secular agendas invariably incite dissension, conflict, and division. God's calling upon us is to preserve the unity that Christ alone has established through his death.

Against the collectivist view of sin and redemption that many evangelicals are adopting, God's Word plainly says that sin is an individual matter and that God

holds individuals accountable for their sins. If racism is individual prejudice against another human because of ethnic origin, it is wicked, worthy of rebuke, and in need of repentance. Jesus Christ took upon himself God's wrath for our sins, in order that we might not live for ourselves but for him who died for our sake and was raised (2 Corinthians 5:14-15). According to the Apostle Paul, this means that we must no longer regard people the way the world does, respecting persons by their outward appearance (2 Corinthians 5:16). We are God's new creation in Christ. The old has passed away; behold the new has come. So, if individual Christians regard others by their outward appearance, they sin and need to repent and restore a right relationship with those against whom they sin. This is the gospel's true and correct "ministry of reconciliation."

Ironically and sadly, instead of engendering harmony among diverse ethnic groups of Christians, the so-called evangelical "ministers of reconciliation" often incite hostility and division, like their secular counterparts, because they adapt the gospel of Jesus Christ to these collectivist ideas. "Ministers of reconciliation," if they are not careful, tend to collectivism because they erase the individuality of people by addressing individuals only as members of groups. The alleged antidote for the plague of racism is simply a different strain of the same sinful virus. Instead, we as Christians must affirm that true virtue is birthed by the gospel alone, which is the only antidote for racism and thus the only basis for true, biblical racial reconciliation.