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Saved by Grace and Living by Race: The Religion Called Racism

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Introduction

I wish to address the forbidden subject of racism and show why it is incompatible with the Christian faith. I say “forbidden” because in our “politically correct” age the existence of racism is often denied by disguising it under euphemistic phrases, such as “ethnic identity/pride” or “being true to one’s cultural heritage.” Even when its prevalence is admitted, it is not always easy to discuss the subject honestly. For example, black people in the United States are too angry to speak about it, and white people are uncomfortable, if not afraid, to address the issue.¹ One should not be surprised, therefore, that even in the Church, whenever the subject of racism comes up for discussion, it is dealt with at the most superficial level.²

Given this background, it is quite remarkable that the Adventist Theological Society (ATS) has had the moral courage to raise this subject, a subject that was, nevertheless, confronted by the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers.³ By opening the discussion at this time the ATS seems to validate a prediction made by Ellen G. White some one hundred years ago. Speaking to the black and white racial issue that raged in her days, she stated: “The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem.”⁴ The current attempt to respond to this “most perplexing problem” of racism could also be seen as an affirmation that one day—in our day—the walls of racial

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

prejudice and bigotry “will tumble down of themselves, as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors.”⁵

The object of this article is captured in the “theologically correct” title I have chosen: “*Saved by Grace and Living By Race: The Religion Called Racism.*” Let me explain. Besides the euphonic flair of the words “grace” and “race,” the first part of the title alludes to the theological connection between the practice of racism by Christians on one hand, and the adoption of legalism by believers in the Galatian Church on the other. The apostle Paul raised this issue when he demanded to know why the Galatian believers, having begun in the Spirit, were seeking to live by the works of the (flesh) law (Galatians 3:2, 3).⁶ The analogy should not be missed. Christians respond, all too often, to issues of racism only when the socio-political realities force them to do so. Even then, instead of living by the moral imperatives of the gospel, those who claim to be saved by grace tend to depend and live by the (secular) law—affirmative action, threats of economic sanctions, protests, etc.—as the sole basis for their ethical conduct.

My attempt in this article, like the apostle Paul’s in his epistle to the Galatians, is to show that the claim, to be saved by grace while at the same time living by race, is irreconcilable with the demands of biblical Christianity. Consequently, individuals who seek to maintain a simultaneous allegiance to both Jesus Christ and to their race (whether conceived in terms of color of the skin or hair, striking appearance of face or body, unusual mode of speech, language or dress, shape of skull, temperament, etc.)⁷ are practicing a form of syncretistic or polytheistic faith. Unfortunately, this has been the practice of many Christians or heirs of Christian civilization.⁸

The Present Context of Racism

We live today in an age that is experiencing an unprecedented oneness in religion (the New Age), in politics (the New World Order), and in economics (free market economics). Our world has become one global city whose highways are inter-connected by advanced networks of transportation, communication, and technol-

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

ogy. However, our age has yet to find a sound basis for overcoming hostilities among people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. While it is true that in many lands, much effort is being expended to kill racism in its various forms, one can still point to the Rodney King race riots in Los Angeles, the “ethnic cleansing” in former Yugoslavia, the hundreds of thousands being killed in tribal warfare in Africa, the violence and bloodshed in the Middle East, and the rise of neo-Nazi hate groups and activities in Europe, the USA and South Africa, as evidences of the fact that racism, “although repeatedly killed, is nevertheless undying.”⁹ Racism may be outlawed in the books and laws of the lands, but it remains written in the hearts of people. Only the “born again” experience offered by biblical Christianity can offer a lasting solution to this tragic human problem plaguing human societies.

Unfortunately, the Christian church, the body of people constituted and appointed by Christ to be a counter-voice in our world, is not totally immune to the virus of racism. Forgetting their status as “resident aliens” in this world,¹⁰ and perhaps, out of comfort, fear or blindness, Christians, by and large, have capitulated to the racism of the world.¹¹ Several years ago sociologists G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger concluded their major study on racism with this statement: “Although the Protestant churches stress (1) the dignity and worth of the individual and (2) the brotherhood of man, the racial behavior patterns of most church members have not been substantially affected by these principles.”¹²

The above observation has yet to be contradicted by current practices in Christian churches. In a recent *Christianity Today* Institute devoted to the “The Myth of Racial Progress,” Billy Graham remarked that even though racial and ethnic hostility is *the* number one social problem facing the world and the church, “evangelical Christians have turned a blind eye to racism or have been willing to stand aside while others take the lead in racial reconciliation, saying it was not our responsibility.”¹³ A historical background to modern racism, as well as a clear understanding of the nature of racism, may explain why Christians have adopted the attitude of indifference to racial problems.¹⁴

Modern Historical Background

Racial prejudice, the tendency to misjudge an individual primarily on the basis of their identity within an ethnic or racial group, has always existed wherever there have been different groups of people.¹⁵ But modern racism, the suggestion that some races are *inherently* superior and inferior, is a fairly recent phenomenon, dating back some three-hundred years.¹⁶ T. B. Maston traces the rise and development of modern race and color prejudices to four major historical events:¹⁷ (1) the discovery of America and the establishment of trade routes to India; (2) the development of the slave trade;¹⁸ (3) the industrial revolution and its contribution to the enormous wealth and prestige of the white people of Europe and America;¹⁹ and (4) Darwin's doctrine of evolution, with the idea of the survival of the fittest, which "was warmly accepted by the people of European stock who saw no reason to doubt that they were the fittest of all."²⁰ Significant in this connection is the "social Darwinism" of English philosopher Herbert Spencer,²¹ who argued that since some populations are "naturally unfit," they represent a biologically or inherently inferior group of individuals. This teaching has not only provided "the ultimate license for social policies of domination" but also "has lent spurious credence to racism."²²

It is this spirit of inherent superiority that characterized the attitude of the European nations as they expanded overseas, competing for colonial power and the conversion of "heathen" natives. Since the European conquerors possessed superior economic and military technology over the enslaved people of color, they were able to explain the superiority of their cultural apparatus in terms of a superior human endowment. In other words, the European exploiters "read from right to left—from cultural effect to a natural or congenital cause."²³

Thus, although modern racism arose as an ideological justification for the constellations of economic and political power which were expressed in colonialism and slavery, George Kelsey explains that "gradually the idea of the superior race was heightened and deepened in meaning and value so that it pointed beyond the historical structures of relation, in which it emerged, to human existence itself." The result of this shift was that the alleged

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

superior race “became and now persists as a center of value and an object of devotion,” with multitudes of people finding their sense and “power of being” from their membership in and identification with the superior race.²⁴

Today racial prejudice and hatred is almost universal—exhibiting itself in a baffling complexity, intensity, and respectability wherever diverse people meet. Besides the prevalent white and black racism,²⁵ racism also manifests itself in forms such as anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, neo-Nazism, tribalism, apartheid, etc. The common thread that passes through all these various manifestations of racism is the idea that one race is inherently superior to all others. This belief, and the practices that issue from it, constitute racism.

The Nature of Racism

An Ideology of Race

Definition. Racism is an ideology (a set of ideas and beliefs about reality) that justifies the prejudice (prejudged negative *attitude*) and discrimination (unjust *acts* of domination, exploitation, dehumanization, etc.) of one group by another.²⁶ While one may trace the roots of racial prejudice to a number of factors,²⁷ the foundational assumption upon which the different expressions of racism is built is that all human beings do not necessarily have *intrinsic* value nor even *equal* worth. In other words, some races are *inherently* superior (in ability, intellect, morality, etc.) to others.²⁸ Historically, the races or groups that have been treated as inferior or subhuman, and possessing lives of little societal or personal worth have included Blacks, Jews, native Americans, Gypsies, and women—although, other groups were also often conflated: criminals, chronically ill, the physically handicapped, the mentally retarded, and unwanted babies. These groups of people have been frequently despised and treated as inferior or subhuman.

Doctrinal Foundation. The primary basis for the belief in the inherent superiority and inferiority of races is the pseudo-scientific doctrine of biological determinism, which holds that “natural law” or biological or genetically transmitted physical characteristics (such as, the color of the skin, eye, hair, or some physical features) do not simply influence, but define the basic humanness

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

and, hence, the status of a person in society.²⁹ Though such a belief may not be harmful in itself, when it becomes the basis of a social policy, such as Hitler sought to employ, the results can be devastating.³⁰

An Ideology of Power

Definition. Racism is not simply a set of beliefs about race but also an ideology of power. Despite their claim to superiority, racists have a feeling of being threatened by members of the inferior race. This is especially so in situations where some members of the alleged inferior races display the same level of expectation (intelligence, character, ability, etc.) normally reserved for the superior race. To overcome their feeling of insecurity, racists seek to retain power (economic, political, military, etc. resources) exclusively in the hands of the superior.³¹ In this way members of the superior race express their self-identity by elaborate acts that systematically deny the essential humanness of people of other races.³²

Manifestation. As an ideology of power, racism takes two major forms: (1) legal or *de jure* racism, in which discriminatory practices are encoded in the laws of the land (such as was the case in the USA and in apartheid South Africa),³³ and (2) institutional or *de facto* racism, where racial practices though not encoded in the laws of the land, are still present (albeit, in subtle and sophisticated form), having been built into the very structure of society.³⁴ Of the two forms of racism, institutional racism poses the greatest challenge to the Christian church. Not only is it difficult to detect, but, as explained by Ian Robertson, institutional racism “is difficult to eradicate, since, obviously, it cannot be repealed, and in most cases is not susceptible to remedial legislation.”³⁵ Many Christian believers fail to appreciate this fact, because they are often inclined to believe that the civil rights laws and similar legislation enacted by secular governments, as well as ecclesiastical statements and policies condemning racism, have automatically eliminated expressions of racial prejudice and discrimination within and without the church.³⁶

A Secular Religion³⁷

Definition. Racism is (1) an attempt to find meaning for human existence by looking to one’s race as the center of value and the object of devotion,³⁸ (2) a religious faith in an unverifiable belief

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

in the inherent superiority of a race—a faith for which countless people will gladly work, suffer, kill, and die.

Characteristics. As a religion, racism shares all the essential characteristics of every other religion (secular or supernatural). Thus, racism has its own: (1) *Sacred* realities, which may take the form of a tangible object (such as a Confederate or Nazi flag), or even a person (e.g. Adolf Hitler or Elijah Muhammad); (2) Sets of *beliefs*, which are creeds and myths that attempt to explain the origin and nature of reality; (3) *Practices*, which are the active observable sides of religion (and may include acts of discrimination, violence, segregation, etc. and may involve rituals and ceremonies, such as wearing a special kind of clothing or hair style); (4) *Symbolisms*, which is an attempt to express the essence of the racist faith by evoking a religious emotion in the follower; in Nazi Germany the symbols used included the swastika, the stretched-out hand and the phrase “*Heil Hitler*”; (5) *Community of worshipers*, which is the social group that shares the beliefs and practices of the racist religion; the racist community may be a church, a tribe (and their practice is tribalism), a gang (whether respectable, like the apartheid government of South Africa, or ignoble, e.g., the Skinheads or Ku Klux Klan), or a nation (in which case the civil religion becomes known as fascism); (6) *Moral values*, which are the racist community’s sense of right and wrong, which it seeks to preserve and transmit to future generations, for the survival of that group (e.g. the view that it is wrong to integrate churches and schools, or marry people of other races, or employ qualified workers of the other races).

But unlike the *supernatural* religions, (such as the traditional world religions of Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam) which emphasize the supernatural and other-worldly values, racism may be classified with communism, socialism, fascism, secular humanism, etc., as one of the most powerful *secular* religions in today’s world. Consequently, just as the other *secular* religions (e.g., communism), racism is in competition with Christianity. For example, all three religions—Christianity, communism and racism:³⁹ (1) revere and obey their Leaders (Christ, Marx, Hitler); (2) rely on authoritative writings (Bible, the writings of Marx and Lenin, or Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of the*

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Human Races (1853);⁴⁰ (3) condemn the evils in society and seek to provide answers to societal problems; (4) extol lofty ideals of justice, equity and brotherhood as basic to meaningful human existence; (5) require absolute obedience, commitment and self-sacrifice; (6) are zealous in winning converts; (7) require faith and confidence that the ideals of their religion will ultimately triumph.

Apparently, because racism has been so well domesticated among those who profess Christianity, few recognize the religious nature of racism. If, however, racism is seen as another religion in competition with Christianity, then the simultaneous adherence, by some Christians, to the God of the Bible and the idol of race is a form of polytheism, and their religious profession is syncretistic. Such Christians may claim to live under the authority of the God of the Bible in many respects, but because they serve two different gods, when they are confronted with crucial matters of race it will soon be apparent that the idol of race will determine their attitude, decision, and action.

Incompatibility of Racism with Christianity

In the preceding section we have argued that racism is not just an ideology of race or power but is also a religion that has its own sets of beliefs and practices. This fact is rarely recognized. In her definition of racism anthropologist Ruth Benedict has correctly suggested that racism is a religion, established on a naturalistic world view,⁴¹ which has the superior race as the focus of its eschatological hope and its philosophy of history. Benedict identifies three cardinal dogmas of the racist faith when she writes that racism is:

the dogma that one ethnic group is condemned by Nature to hereditary inferiority and another group is destined to hereditary superiority. It is the dogma that the hope of civilization depends upon eliminating some races and keeping others pure. It is the dogma that one race has carried progress throughout human history and can alone ensure future progress.⁴²

The following remarks will briefly summarize the racist faith and show why it is incompatible with biblical Christianity.

Epistemology: Religious Starting Point. Epistemology asks: How does one come to a knowledge of truth? Biblical Chris-

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

tianity teaches that the way to come to a dependable knowledge of truth about reality is “from above”—through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ and His written Word (2 Tim 3:15-17; John 17:3). On the other hand, the religion of racism distorts the biblical method by offering two alternative sources of knowledge, both of which are “from below”: (1) internal source (self-knowledge), and (2) external source (knowledge of the other race). Both of these are a reflection on the human situation.

On the one hand racists hold that in order to really understand “what is going on” in a given social context, one must belong to the alleged superior race. Thus, a statement like, “You don’t understand because you are not black/white/Hispanic,” may have racist overtones, in that understanding is predicated on identification with a given race. The subtle implication is that unless one is black/white/Hispanic, one cannot fully appreciate or empathize with people of those races. In this respect racist epistemology is similar to those reflected in theologies of liberation, feminism, and homosexuality which also assert that one can only know the truth about a particular reality when one is poor or oppressed, a woman, or a gay. One way this idea of self-knowledge is reinforced is through versions of teaching dubbed “ethnic pride/identity.”

Alternatively, the external source of religious knowledge for the racist is obtained through a knowledge of the other race. This is illustrated in statements like: “you must know the truth about the black/white man, if—” or “you’ve got to understand the black/white/Hispanic person’s thinking or ability if—”. The knowledge being sought usually is in the form of stereotypes (exaggerated beliefs/myths/jokes) about the different races.

There are two major problems with the racist way of knowing. First, it distorts the essential humanness of all races by exaggerating the significance of their outward appearances at the expense of their inner “kinship of spirit.” This inner relatedness of all races (analogous to what theologians refer to as *congeniality*) is established on the fact that all human beings were created in the image of God, and consequently have been endowed with a capacity to understand, empathize, appreciate, and communicate with all races—irrespective of their racial backgrounds.

Second, since racist epistemology is “from below” and not

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

“from above,” racist theology tends to look up to sociology, anthropology, history, and “science,” rather than to biblical revelation, to provide explanations and answers to racial problems. It should be noted that while the Bible is sometimes consulted by the racists, the Bible plays only a supportive role, bolstering postures that have already been taken; even then, Scriptural passages are used selectively.⁴³

Doctrine of Creation. The Bible’s teaching of the biological unity and racial parity of all people is established by its doctrine of creation. When, for example, Paul declared that God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), his statement emphasizes two important facts: “On one hand, the entire creation is unified in the *One God*. On the other hand, biological unity is affirmed, for all men are of *one blood*.”⁴⁴ Commenting on this text, Ellen White wrote: “In the sight of God all are on an equality; and to the Creator every human being owes supreme allegiance.”⁴⁵ The biblical doctrine of the seventh-day Sabbath is an eternal witness to God as Creator (Exod 20:8-11), and hence, the reason why He alone is worthy of our worship (Rev 14:6, 7). The religion of racism, however, denies this biblical doctrine of creation by (1) challenging the character of God as a perfect Creator; (2) inverting the order *in* creation; and (3) undermining the nature *of* creation.

The Genesis creation account states that at the conclusion of each phase of God’s creative activity, God Himself declared His creation as “good.” Racism’s teaching of the ontological inferiority of some races not only negates this biblical teaching of a perfect creation from the hands of God, but it also affronts the character of God. For if part of God’s original creation is inherently defective, it implies that God is no better than the Demiurge of second-century Gnosticism, an imperfect creator god who is responsible for introducing error into his creation.

Also, by teaching the supremacy of a race, and hence the domination of one by another, racist theology sets itself against the biblical teaching about the order in creation. This racist teaching implies that some races of human beings belong to the natural order; they are not part of the human family to whom was entrusted the responsibility of having dominion over the created things (Gen

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

1:26). T. F. Torrance has correctly argued that the racist understanding of man involves “an inversion of the very order of creation,” and runs “directly counter to the divine purpose of grace upon which the whole creation depends.”⁴⁶

Finally, by teaching that his own race is superior to all others, the racist seeks “to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3). It is self-glorification or self-religion—the worship of “the creature rather than the Creator” (Rom 1:25).⁴⁷ Thus, racism is the highest form of self-deification. The fact that God’s judgment—in the form of guilt, frustration, hostility, etc.—is being visited on the human race is an indication that God will not remain silent when people “exchange the truth of God for a lie” and worship the creature rather than the Creator.

Doctrine of Human Beings. The Bible’s teaching that human beings were created in God’s image suggests that human beings possess intrinsic value or equal worth before God, and that they are endowed with the power of choice. As the Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief 7 puts it, “man and woman were made in the image of God with individuality, the power and freedom to think and to do. . . .” Because they have the power of choice, human beings are free moral agents, in the sense that “they make their own decisions as to what they will do, choosing as they please in the light of their sense of right and wrong and the inclinations they feel” and as such they are “answerable to God and each other for their voluntary choices.”⁴⁸ Racism, however challenges this important biblical doctrine. Its naturalistic teaching of the inherent superiority and inferiority of the races implies a certain kind of biological or genetic determinism.

According to this belief of the religion of racism, if a person succeeds or fails in a particular field of study (e.g., athletic sport or academics) it is because that person has been “predestined” by his/her genes to succeed or fail. What a person does, or what he/she becomes is biologically predetermined or built into him/her at conception. In other words, a person’s personhood or moral worth, or lack of it, is determined by his or her hereditary endowment. Whenever stereotypical statements alleging that blacks/Jews/Hispanics/whites “are by nature—,” or whenever one tries to distance oneself from people of other races because “there’s

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

something about them that is repulsive to me,” these attitudes and statements are echoes of the naturalistic world view upon which the biological determinism of racism is founded.

Not only is biological determinism pseudo-scientific, and pessimistic, in that it puts limits on human performance and potential, but also this doctrine of racism is dangerously fatalistic in its suggestion that a particular race cannot transcend the artificial barrier that has been erected by racist theology upon them. If this doctrine of racist theology were true, there would be no human accountability of the actions of people, and there would also be no basis for divine judgment for human conduct, but the latter is a primary teaching of the Bible (Acts 17:31; Rev 14:6, etc.).

Doctrine of the Fall and Sin. The Bible teaches that, although human beings were created perfect, as a consequence of Adam’s fall “all [including the so-called superior race] have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23; 5:12; 1 Cor 15:22). The Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Belief (7) reads:

When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil⁴⁹

In so far as a fallen human being makes himself or some collective projection of himself the object of love and value, the racist faith denies a fall for the superior race, and therefore denies the biblical doctrine of original sin—universal sin originating from Adam.

Even if racist theology admits that the superior race has also fallen, it has to reinterpret the nature of the fall in order to be true to its racist doctrine of an inferior/superior race. Thus, for example, the doctrine that some human beings are defective in their very being implies that the so-called inferior races have experienced a double-fall—the first being due to the fall of Adam, and the second, a special racial fall. Alternatively, since, to the racist, the loss of racial purity and race-mixing is a sin against the Creator,⁵⁰ racist theology has to teach that, the superior race experiences a fall whenever it allows its blood to mix with the inferior race.⁵¹

The Bible does not teach such a doctrine. For if it were true,

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

(1) the superior race would have no need for the atonement of Jesus Christ, since it does not accept its fallen condition, and (2) the inferior race would have no hope of redemption since it would need a second sacrifice of Jesus to atone for their second racial fall. Ultimately, the racist doctrine of the fall is an affront to the character of God.

The Doctrine of the Great Controversy. The Bible teaches that there exists a great controversy between Christ and His people on one hand, and Satan and his people on the other (Eph 6:10ff). In this cosmic conflict the issue centers upon the character of God, as is reflected in the sinless life of the incarnate Christ and expressed in the moral Ten-Commandment Law.⁵² The religion of racism also acknowledges that there is a cosmic conflict between two major forces. However, it challenges the biblical teaching by redefining the participants in the conflict along racial lines.

Thus, in the supernatural realm, God and His angels, who are recast in the image of the superior race, are at war with Satan and his evil angels, viewed by racist religion as the essence of the inferior race. This cosmic dualism is also brought into the natural realm where racists create a “We versus Them” dichotomy among people. In the context of black/white racism, even non-human objects are assigned to their black and white spheres (e. g., black sheep, black market, black list), and personal problems between people of different races are recast along racial lines.

Not only is it accepted as an *a priori* truth that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the races, but also a cosmic conflict between them in which each individual is expected to stand up for his or her kind.⁵³ In this kind of dualism, racial harmony, according to racist theology, is ensured when members of the different races know “their place” in society. In other words, to avoid conflict the two worlds must be kept apart, separated or segregated (in housing, jobs, churches, or marriage). Racism believes that the different races must live their lives apart from each other as if the other does not exist.⁵⁴

Thus, Christians who are racists can live in the same town or city, without ever visiting the home of another race, attending their church, or school. They may belong to the same Union, but hardly be aware of the existence of the other. Out of sight means out of

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

mind. Even when the other race comes to the racist's church, the racist Christian will politely suggest: "there is another church over there where you will feel more comfortable." And not only will the racist minister make no efforts to evangelize other races in his area, but when a member of the despised race seeks membership in his church, the minister will piously "transfer" the new member to a congregation next door that belongs to the despised race.

Philosophy of History. Gerhard Maier has correctly observed that in the Bible's view, all of history unfolds under God's planning and direction. This is because it was God who brought creation into being to be the "arena of history"; He also created time to measure the "movement of history"; and He formed the human being to be an "entity inhabiting history."⁵⁵ Thus, history always proceeds under God's divine sovereignty. Ellen G. White captures this theocentric view of history in this way:

In the annals of human history the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as dependent on the will and prowess of man. The shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, behind, above, and through all the play and counterplay of human interests and power and passions, the agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will.⁵⁶

This biblical view of history is, however, overthrown in the religion of racism, according to which the superior race is the center of human history.

In the faith of racism the shaping forces of history are the polar opposites of races. Just as in the secular religion of communism economic substructure creates the proletariat and bourgeois social classes, and the clash between the two becomes the basis for the interpretation of the meaning of history, so in racism. The only difference is that in the religion of racism, the shaping forces of history are determined by genetic (not economic) forces. Also, because in the racist religion it is only "one race [the superior race that] has carried progress throughout human history and can alone ensure future progress,"⁵⁷ meaningful history is that which is associated with the superior race. Unless the superior race is involved somehow in an event, there is no history. Thus, for example,

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

the racist not only ignores, discounts, or distorts the histories of other races, but also, will not want to listen or learn from other races. After all, the only history worth recording or paying attention to is the history of or the history interpreted by the superior race.⁵⁸

While racism cannot be blamed for every failure to recognize the contributions and potentials of people of color, one may wonder if racial arrogance plays no part in the Christian Church's seeming unwillingness to give equal opportunity to Christians of all races in the theological, missiological and administrative activities of the church's life? A recognition of the true biblical conception of God's leading in history (cf. Acts 11:17) can correct the pervasive spirit that is actuated by racism's morality of pride and contempt for the other race when it comes to the Church's life and work.

Ethical System. The Christian's ethic of race relations is predicated on the belief in the "*sanctity* of human life"—the belief that since human beings were created in the image of God, all human lives have *equal* value and worth, and should, therefore, be treated with respect and dignity. The Bible presents the Ten Commandments as the clearest norm for human conduct, and Jesus Christ as the supreme exemplification of this Law. Racism, however, upholds the "*quality* of human life" doctrine, the belief that since the personhood of human beings is determined by their biological characteristics, some human lives have only a *relative* value.

According to the "quality-of-human-life" ethic (also known as utilitarianism or situation ethics),⁵⁹ since some human beings are not true "persons," where necessary (i.e. to enhance the quality of life of the superior persons), they may be exploited and even killed. The institution of slavery in the USA is one classic example of racism's "quality-of-human-life" ethic. Thus, the Supreme Court ruled, in the *Dred Scott* case of 1857, that the Black race was less than human and that a slave could be treated as the personal property of the owner. Chief Justice Roger Taney (himself a slave owner) argued:

They [Blacks] had for more than a century been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect; and that the negro might justly and lawfully be reduced to slavery for his

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

benefit. He was bought and sold, and treated as an ordinary article of merchandise and traffic, whenever a profit could be made by it.⁶⁰

The religion of racism, and the “quality-of-human-life” ethic that is established upon it, is by its very nature, a violation of the principles of God’s Law as well as the spirit of Christ, who was a friend of hated publicans and despised sinners (Matt 11:19; Luke 5:29-30; 15:1, 2).

Doctrine of Redemption. Biblical Christianity teaches that the redemption of the human race, secured once and for all by Jesus Christ through His substitutionary atonement on Calvary, will be ushered in at His second coming (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess 4:14ff.; 2 Pet 3) and be consummated in the earth made new (Rev 21). In other words, the redemption of the human race is a divine act graciously extended to all—Jews and Gentiles—who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. However, in the religion of racism, since the fall means “racial impoverishment,” the mixing of the blood of the superior race with that of inferior, “the essence of redemption is racial renewal, the revivification of the superior race by techniques of purification.”⁶¹ In other words, racist theology teaches that human beings (the super-race) can effect their own redemption—a doctrine that has led to the subordination, oppression, deprivation and extermination of the alleged inferior races (Blacks, Jews, poor, mentally ill, deformed, weak, etc.).

This belief flows out of the racism’s mechanistic doctrine of human nature. Given its belief in biological determinism, the eschatological reasoning of racists may go somewhat like this: Since changing the environment cannot change behavior, the superior race must take steps to protect itself and its superior genes from being diminished by members of the inferior race. When this kind of reasoning is adopted as a social policy, it leads to a delimitation, degradation, and dehumanization of some races. In the legal racism of Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa, for example, this led to the promulgation of laws that curtail the freedom of movement, or rights of property, or citizenship, or freedom of marriage, and in some extreme cases, collection, or “concentration” of the inferior races and, perhaps, the ultimate or final solution to ensure permanent protection of the superior race. For if some races are

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

inherently superior and others inferior, the superior race must be bred and the inferior race must be eliminated.⁶²

It is this that Ruth Benedict has in mind when she defines racism's second dogma as a belief that "the hope of civilization depends upon eliminating some races and keeping others pure."⁶³ In pursuit of the racist's eschatological dream, a number of techniques have been used, over the years. These range from race improvement techniques (such as psychological motivation or group affirmation of self, or identity seminars) to "scientific" programs of social engineering like "positive" and "negative" eugenics.⁶⁴ While positive eugenics involves the multiplication of the superior race by careful selection and breeding of people possessing superior genes, negative eugenics may take several forms, including efforts that prevent procreation by inferior races (e.g., by using contraceptives, sterilization, etc.), and those involving ethnic or racial cleansing or the elimination of the unwanted inferior race (whether it is by warfare, lynching, eugenic-abortions, euthanasia, or even nuclear experimentation).

Evaluation of Racism

The forgoing discussion has shown that the belief system of racism, in whatever form it may appear, is indeed antithetical to biblical religion. If this is the case, then Bible-believing Christians—individuals who have been saved by grace and are seeking to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ—cannot accept this secular religion. Additionally, the ethics of racism can be shown to be a violation of God's Moral Ten-Commandment Law and the example of Jesus Christ.

Thus, with regard to God's moral Ten Commandment Law, Everett Tilson has shown that racism breaches:⁶⁵ (1) The first commandment, because it substitutes race for God as the organizing center of life; (2) the second commandment, because it turns the face of a particular race into a graven image, then bows down and worships "the likeness" of what is "in the earth beneath"; (3) the third commandment's prohibition against taking God's name in vain when the Christian who is a racist piously cries "Lord, Lord," but does not do the will of God by showing the love of God—which is "value blind, creed blind, color-blind—to his neighbor (cf. Matt

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

7:21-23); (4) the fourth commandment in that on the Sabbath, instead of bringing Christians together because of their common faith, it keeps them apart despite the common faith; (5) the fifth commandment to “honor thy father and thy mother,” because it defines kinship in terms of blood rather than faith (cf. Matt 12:48-50); (6) the sixth commandment not only because the racist literally kills the despised race, but also because the derogatory words of the racist “can be just as murderous as the sword or bomb in the hands of a maniac” (cf. Matt 5:21-22); (7) the seventh commandment, because among other things, it equates adultery with adulteration of blood; (8) the eighth commandment, in that it robs the inferior race of equal access to opportunities, and respect and dignity due them as human beings; (9) the ninth commandment, in that it bears false witness about both races by ascribing the undeserved advantages of the superior race to extraneous considerations (such as his industry, superior intelligence, moral rectitude, etc.), while the denial of basic rights to the despised race is justified on the grounds that he is lazy, unintelligent, or immoral;⁶⁶ and finally, (10) the tenth commandment, by making one race covet what truly belongs to the despised race.

Jesus’ earthly life and teaching also refuted the ethics of racism. One can point to the story of the Syrophenician woman (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) as a classic example of how Jesus viewed the morality of racial prejudice and bigotry. In the form of an acted parable Jesus portrayed to His followers the unchristian manner in which they have often treated people of other ethnic and racial backgrounds,⁶⁷ and sought to teach them the compassionate manner in which they ought to deal with the “despised race.” Speaking about the “wider purpose” of Christ’s dealing with the Syrophenician woman, Ellen White suggests that Jesus demonstrated that any form of caste—distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege—“is hateful to God,” and that His love “was not to be circumscribed to race or nation.”⁶⁸

Thus, in His own day, Jesus not only confronted the national and religious pride that had developed as a result of Israel’s status as a favored people, but He also condemned the resulting racial and religious prejudice and bigotry—the contempt and heartless treatment of other races, as well as the polarization of groups into

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

Greeks and Barbarians, Jews and Samaritans, and Jews and Gentiles. Of these racial conflicts, the Jewish-Samaritan problem was probably “the most acute racial, national, and religious conflict of His [Christ’s] day,” comparable, to no small extent “in its depth and viciousness” to the black-white problem of our day.⁶⁹

By His life and teaching Jesus passed a negative judgment on racism. First, instead of endorsing the prevalent secular religion of racism, He “laid the foundation” for a completely different religion “by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God.”⁷⁰ Second, by commissioning His followers to be His witnesses “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth,” (Acts 1:8) He embraced all races as objects of salvation. Why did Jesus include “and Samaria”?⁷¹ T. B. Maston’s suggests that Samaria was deliberately included, because “Jesus intended to challenge the strongest prejudice of His followers of that day.”⁷² Ellen White, therefore, explains that, by His life and teaching (cf. Matt 15:21-28; Luke 15:1, 2; John 4), Christ sought to instruct His “slow to learn” followers that not only was His love “not to be circumscribed to race or nation,” but that any form of caste—distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege—is hateful to God.⁷³

Seventh-day Adventists may probably have understated their judgement on racism when they simply state that “racism is sinful.”⁷⁴ Will D. Campbell underscores the seriousness of racial sin when he argues that it is a “heresy”⁷⁵ for Bible-believers to adhere to the tenets of the religion of racism. The Jewish scholar, Abraham J. Heschel, goes even farther in his evaluation. He insists that racism is “worse than idolatry,” it is “satanism,” an “unmitigated evil,” “a treacherous denial of the existence of God” and “blasphemy.”⁷⁶

The argument, thus far, has some implications. Racism is so incompatible with the Christian faith that anyone who professes Christianity and at the same time is a racist will find himself living under two different ethical values: racism’s morality of pride and contempt for the other race, and Christianity’s ethic, in which followers of Christ are called upon to show love, compassion, and respect to all people irrespective of their ethnic or racial back-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

grounds. The only way that a “Christian racist” can reconcile the two conflicting tendencies is by transforming the Christian values, so that he isolates Christian morality from certain areas of his life.⁷⁷

The challenge to Christians today is one that requires that they correct their past history with regard to race relations, a history in which the major denominations compromised their Christian ethic to the mood and practices of their ambient culture; a history in which they were indifferent or vacillated when they had the opportunity to speak and act; and a history that reveals that many of the acts of injustice are still firmly entrenched in the present institutional structures of Church and society. Of the Bible-believing Christian churches, Seventh-day Adventists are most equipped to deal with the racial issue.

Racism: Adventism’s Challenge

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a unique opportunity to address the issue of racism in both society and the church. First, the Adventist Church’s self-understanding as *the remnant Church*—the true Israel of God—recognizes the fact that just as was the case in OT Israel, membership in the New Israel is not dependent on natural birth but on the spiritual birth of conversion (John 3:3-21); not on ethnic blood but on the redeeming blood of Christ (Heb 9:14, 15). The only kind of race the Bible recognizes is not a superior race, but a holy race (1 Pet 2:9); and the only kind of *apartheid* (an Afrikaans word that means separation) acceptable in the biblical religion is separation from sin.

Second, the Adventist Church understands its reason for existence not in terms of an exclusivistic communion that boasts of its privileged status as the remnant, but rather as a unique body of people with a unique *global mission* in the world. They have been called to praise Jesus Christ, the One who “has redeemed us to God by [His] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev 5:9) and to proclaim His everlasting gospel unto “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev 14:6).

Third, the *unique name* by which the Church is identified, Seventh-day Adventist, calls for a unique display of racial harmony.⁷⁸ The “Seventh-day” component of their name announces

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

its theology of the Sabbath. The Genesis creation account points to God as the Creator (and hence, re-Creator or Redeemer) and Father of all human races. The fourth Commandment which enshrines the Sabbath is designed to remind believers every week of the inherent worth of every person, and the need to treat them—irrespective of their gender, race or class—with respect and dignity (Exod 20:8-11). Indeed, their doctrine of creation is “the antidote to idolatry,” is the “foundation of true worship,” is “the basis for true worth,” and is “the basis for true fellowship.”⁷⁹

The “Adventist” component in their name recognizes that in the church, and in the earth made new, there are going to be people from “every nation, tribe, people, and language.” This reality is a fact of history falling within divine providence. That such a community—a grouping of humankind from every nationality, race, and language—should actually exist in a world that is torn by ethnic and racial divisions and hatred will be a wonder and a marvel to the world. Thus, the church is “a kind of preliminary model, on a small and imperfect scale, of what the final state of mankind is to be in God’s design.”⁸⁰

The above three identifying characteristics of the Church—its identity as a remnant, its global mission, and its unique name—compel the Church to exhibit to the world a kind of racial harmony that has, perhaps, not been experienced in the world since the early church. Describing how the early church conceived itself in the world, one writer in the second century has written:

Christians are not to be distinguished from other men by country, language, or customs. They have no cities of their own, they use no peculiar dialect, and they practice no extraordinary way of life. Residing in cities of the Greek world and beyond it, as is the lot of each, they follow the local customs in clothing, diet, and general manner of life, but at the same time they exhibit the constitution of their own commonwealth as something quite paradoxical. They reside in their homelands—but as aliens. Every foreign land is home to them, every homeland a place of exile. . . .⁸¹

Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventist history bears eloquent testimony to the fact that not only has their church been silent and insensitive to racial issues, but also it has often been guilty of ethnic or racial prejudice, discrimination, pride, condescension, pater-

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

nalism, and scorn to some groups within its membership.⁸² Seventh-day Adventist historian, Richard W. Schwartz, has summarized, in his *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, how this racial attitude was manifested in the Adventist Church:

Afro-Americans were not the only group to be treated for years in a paternal, patronizing way. Adventist missionaries going to Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the early years of the twentieth century did not escape the general Western imperialistic attitude practiced by the colonial powers. In general this attitude tended to equate European culture, education, and technology with progress. The more another culture varied from the European or North American model, the more backward it was assumed to be. It was easy to conclude that nationals from non-Western areas could not be trusted in leadership roles until they had absorbed Western ways as well as Adventist doctrines.⁸³

Explaining why Adventists have “had their share of casualties over racial issues,” George R. Knight, in his recent brief history of Seventh-day Adventists, *Anticipating the Advent*, argues that “racial prejudice, like other sins, is not totally eradicated in most Christians at conversion. Nor are the racial tensions embodied in a culture easy for the churches existing in that culture to overcome.”⁸⁴ This fact poses a serious challenge that requires an urgent response.

Towards Racial Harmony

As Ellen White states, “The same agencies that barred men away from Christ eighteen hundred years ago are at work today.” The spirit of pride and prejudice “which built up the partition wall between Jew and Gentile is still active.”⁸⁵ If the racial problem is not to “ever remain a most perplexing problem” for the Adventist Church,⁸⁶ then the time is ripe for the church seek biblical insights to address the problem of racism in the church.⁸⁷ The following are a few suggestions.

Acknowledge Our Racial Prejudices. Expounding upon the meaning of the holocaust for Christians today, David A. Rausch has stated: “The most dangerous attitude we can have is to think that we have no prejudice. The next danger is to believe that it cannot make us cold and indifferent—that it does not harm our

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

society and that it takes no toll on our spiritual life.”⁸⁸ To begin the process of racial healing and harmony we must be humble enough to acknowledge the fact that we too, like the people in the world, have often cherished racial attitudes and engaged in racially discriminatory acts. This should not be too hard for us to accept since the Bible records that even in the Apostolic church, among the founders of the Christian faith, racial and ethnic prejudice was cherished.

Thus, when Peter declared in the house of Cornelius, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34), he was speaking for many of the early Jewish Christians.⁸⁹ One rather surprising thing about this statement is that it took some ten years after Pentecost for Peter—an apostle of Christ and a prominent leader in the Apostolic church, a Spirit-filled Pentecost evangelist whose preaching on one day yielded some 3,000 souls—”to perceive” that God is no respecter of persons, and that his favor is not along racial or ethnic lines. Like the other believers, Peter had a theoretical knowledge of the truth of the gospel,⁹⁰ yet he did not fully understand that it had some practical, ethical implications for his own life. Peter and the others did not “perceive” racism or ethnic prejudice is not acceptable to God.⁹¹

Could the Scriptures be telling us something? Perhaps, suggesting that even a Bible-believing Christian, an honest, missionary-minded believer, successful soul-winner, capable and well-meaning church administrator, professor of religion or theology, and an active and God-fearing church member can cherish racial or ethnic prejudice, without fully realizing it?

Confess the Sins of Racism. Peter’s statement, “Of truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. . .” must be understood as a public act of confession. He certainly understood that injustice cannot be forgotten, but it can be forgiven upon confession. Therefore, if we desire racial harmony, we must confess our sins for deliberately or unknowingly perpetrating racism. We must confess our sin:

—for remaining silent when there was opportunity for us to act nobly and courageously in treating people of all races as equal;

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

—for shirking our responsibility to show concern for the poor and oppressed, instead of blaming them for the racial injustices they suffer;

—for the racial and derogatory jokes/expressions (and the “innocent” caricatures and stereotypes) we have used for other races when we were behind closed committee doors;

—of paternalistic “love” for the despised race—as long as we kept them “in their place”;

—for the will-to-power that is often exhibited by clandestine political maneuvers at church council deliberations, elections, and appointments;

—for encouraging “race-flight” in the churches when other races begin to worship with us;

—for equating Christianity with Western “civilization,” and Seventh-day Adventism with ideological conservatism of a political party in the USA;⁹²

—for placing “prejudicial stumbling-blocks” in the path of our children, and letting them mimic our racial attitudes and actions

But moral responsibility for racism must also be shared by those of us who have been historic victims of racial prejudice and bigotry. We also must confess our sins for being as much a part of the racial problem as the perpetrator. We must confess our sins.⁹³

—for mirroring and retaliating with prejudice, bitterness and anger the prejudice we ourselves have experienced;

—for being suspicious of the intentions, and for rebuffing as hypocritical, all genuine gestures of goodwill from persons belonging to the favored race;

—for accusing and blaming the children of the favored race for the wrongs committed by their parents;

—for the times when we have “Uncle Tomed” (i.e., hypocritically eulogized) the perpetrators of racism;

—for the occasions when, for personal gain, power, and anger, we have argued for the existence and perpetuation of racially exclusive churches, schools and institutions;

—for casting every conflict between us and others as a racial problem, and for blaming our lack of responsibility and personal failures upon other races.

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

For if we all confess our racial sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Seek Biblical Solutions. We must seek biblical solutions to the problems of racism. This means that we must, first, clearly understand that the root cause of racism is not economic or political exploitation, but *human pride*. And if the problem of racism is a “heart problem,” then, the cure for this is not through “education, culture, the exercise of the will, [or] human effort,” all of which “may produce an outward correctness of behavior, but they cannot change the heart.” We need to have a born again experience. “There must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. his grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul and attract it to God, to holiness.”⁹⁴ Henry Ward Beecher puts it well:

The moment a man’s heart touches the heart of Christ in living faith, he becomes, whether he knows it or not, the brother of every other, in heaven or on earth, who has come into the same relationship with Christ. Whoever is united to Christ is brother or sister to everybody else that is united to Him.⁹⁵

Second, in the pursuit of racial harmony, we must be clear about our objective. For example, we must pursue the path of *reconciliation*, not a forced *integration*. For while integration—a political pursuit that makes it illegal for one to discriminate against the other on the basis of his race—may be helpful in reducing the effects of racism, a lasting solution is only possible through the transforming power of Christ (2 Cor 5:16-21). The gospel imperative for reconciliation is much stronger than the legal urge for racial integration (Matt 5:24; 2 Cor 5:18-20).⁹⁶

Third, we must not confuse the Christian’s pursuit of *unity* among the various races, with the secular agitation for *equality*⁹⁷—a political declaration that is enshrined in the constitution or laws of nations, and which can be redefined or revoked by legislators, when they so wish (e.g., the *Dred Scott* decision during the era of slavery, and the *Roe v. Wade* ruling with respect to the abortion issue). Christians must be certain of who it is that makes the *declaration* of human equality. If it is the Creator God of the Bible, they must clearly understand in what way all human beings are equal—whether it is an ontological equality or a functional

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

equality. The Church may need to remind itself that the only kind of equality that the Bible teaches is ontological equality, not a functional equality (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; Eph 4).⁹⁸

Develop Interracial Relationships. Since racism is kept alive by ignorance of the other races—the absence of genuine intimate knowledge of others, and an unwillingness to engage in genuine interaction—racial harmony can be restored and strengthened only if we make the effort of moving beyond our segregated homes, neighborhoods, schools, churches, conferences, etc., and relating meaningfully with people of other races.

The process that led to Peter’s “perceiving” that God is no respecter of persons began with *prayer* (on the part of both Peter and Cornelius). Then, contrary to the restrictions imposed by societal customs and traditions (Acts 10:28), Peter risked his life, career, and position in order to establish a *relationship* between himself (a representative of the favored race) and Cornelius (a member of the despised race). Peter allowed the messengers from Cornelius “to be his guests” (Acts 10:23), and Cornelius, apparently, permitted Peter and his fellow Jews to stay with him “for a few days” (Acts 10:48; cf. 11:3). Can we imagine what would happen if we began to visit one another, and shared our homes and meals? When we truly get to know people of other races as real human beings, no different from us,

—we shall begin to identify our next door neighbors as Sue and John, and not “my white neighbors”; we shall recognize the physician as Dr. Jones, and not as a “fine black doctor”;

—we shall not only allow them to speak, but we shall make efforts to hear them in our church publications and at our church council meetings;⁹⁹

—we shall hire them in our churches and schools not in order to fulfill some racial quotas, but because they are the best qualified personnel available when we assign duties;

—we shall not place members of the different races in stereotypical positions (such as blacks in church ministry and personal ministry departments, and whites in theology and treasury departments), but where they are most gifted to be;

—we shall celebrate their histories not as monuments to tokenism, but because their experiences have kinship with our own;

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

—we shall not be as hesitant as we are today about interracial adoption and interracial marriages; for then, it will be easier for us to accept the members of the other race not only as our brothers and sisters, but also as our brothers and sisters-*in-law*.

Take a Stand Against Racial Prejudice and Injustice. Restoring and strengthening racial harmony requires that we take a stand against any form of racial injustice, wherever and whenever it appears—and not only when the problem concerns our race. It compels us to be ethically sensitive to issues affecting human beings (war, abortion, euthanasia, poverty, unemployment, ecology, etc). In this effort, those who have historically been perpetrators and beneficiaries of legal and institutional racism must take the lead.

The NT suggests that those who have been in privileged positions or situations and those who have benefited from their favored status—i.e., those who were slow to recognize that “God is no respecter of persons”—should be foremost in speaking out against racial injustice. For example, Peter (1 Pet 1:17), Paul (Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6), and James 2:1, all proclaimed without fear this doctrine. John, the disciple, who once wished Jesus to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans, was the one who went on a loving mission to the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-25). And this may explain Ellen White’s rhetorical question: “Is there not much due to them [colored race] from the white people? After so great a wrong has been done them, should not an earnest effort be made to lift them up?”¹⁰⁰ This is the true spirit of Christianity, which teaches the believer “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think” (Rom 12:3), “but in humility count others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:3, RSV).

Taking a stand for justice means that:

—some of us will have to go the extra mile by equipping (financially or otherwise) some members of the underprivileged race so that their talents as missionaries, administrators, theologians, etc., can be developed;¹⁰¹

—when there are opportunities for employment or advancement, etc., we would not ignore or overlook the underprivileged group;

—since English has been adopted as the lingua franca of the church, and yet a majority of the church does not speak it, in some

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

instances, such as at major business sessions, the world wide church will have to make an alternate provision to enable the majority to voice their opinions (in say, Spanish, Swahili or Russian) on issues that affect the general direction of the church;

—in a united church, such as our own, no one region of the world field would be tempted to arrogantly defy the consensus of the church on theological issues, nor blackmail the church to adopt a certain position because of its economic and human resources;

—we quit masquerading our contempt for some races in the church by using political categories (such as patriarchal/authoritarian vs. egalitarian/democratic) to describe their theological views;

—whenever the church is called upon to compute its success, some of us will have to take a stand and insist that the computation should not be in terms of dollars and degrees, but in terms of faithfulness to historic Christian truths, and in terms of costly discipleship.¹⁰²

Conclusion

One of the most tragic chapters in human experience records the practice of racism. It has created in its victims a sense of inferiority, defeatism, resentment, and a determination to get even. It has despised, beaten, wounded, robbed, bruised and left unconscious people of other races, while those who are in a position to show compassion and bind up the wounds of the victims of racism, like the priest and Levite in Christ's parable of the Good Samaritan, have passed by on the other side. Worse still, racism has murdered many innocent people just because of the shape of their noses, the color of their skins or some other physical features.

Can anyone still doubt the fact that the tenets of the secular religion called racism are so incompatible with the Christian faith, that anyone who claims to be saved by grace, cannot live by race? Can it still be disputed that if a Christian is found to be a racist, his profession is a syncretistic faith, and hence a departure from the everlasting gospel?

The good news, however, is that Bible-believing Christians do not have to worship at any of the shrines of racism. In the person

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

of Jesus Christ we have the God of all races. The children's Sabbath School song summarizes this:

Jesus loves the little Children,
All the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.¹⁰³

These words state a very profound truth of biblical Christianity: the principle of love is the foundation of the supernatural religion that Christ Himself has founded¹⁰⁴—love for God, and love for our neighbors—irrespective of their race. Even more, Christ Himself can effect the necessary transformation in our lives to follow in His steps.

“Our remembrance of the love of Jesus, a love that directed Him to declare that even *enemies* are to be loved, should strengthen the Christian on this journey. If we are to love our enemies, should we not also love our fellow neighbor of a different race, ethnic origin, or religious faith?”¹⁰⁵ Ellen G. White is emphatic: “When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very differently from the way in which it is now regarded.”¹⁰⁶

Can we imagine the powerful impact our Christianity will have, if we live out the ethical implications of our calling as a people who are saved by grace and are living by *faith*?

Endnotes

1 This fact is captured by William A. Henry III, “Pride and Prejudice,” *Time* (February 28, 1994), 21, in his cover story article, when he speaks about the two “ugly truths of American life.” He writes: “A great many black Americans view their white fellow citizens with anger. And a great many white Americans view their black fellow citizens with fear.”

2 Over three decades ago, Kyle Haselden asked: “Why are there so many Christians who, belonging to the same church, converse with each other only on the most superficial level, smiling and amiable as they meet but never discussing with each other the issues which trouble them most?” Haselden urges Christians to answer this question if they are to discover “why Christian communion is in most churches a pretense, a cordial but uneasy fiction, rather than a strengthening, creative reality” (see Kyle Haselden, *Mandate for White Christians* [Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966], p. 24).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

3 For a discussion of the attitude of Ellen White and the Adventist pioneers on the question of black and white race relations, see Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (Oberlin, OH: Laymen's Leadership Conference, 1965); Ronald D. Graybill, *Ellen G. White and Church Race Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1970).

4 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1948), 9:214; this statement was written on June 5, 1899 (see White, *The Southern Work*, pp. 117-118).

5 Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1983), p. 217.

6 According to Paul, such an effort on the part of believers is tantamount to "seeking to be justified by the law"—instead of by grace (Gal 5:4). He referred to their action as a perversion of and departure from the gospel (Gal 1:6, 7) and Christ (5:4); he argued that those "bewitched" by this "folly" were in bondage and under a curse. Paul's goal in the epistle to the Galatians was not only to show the incompatibility of being saved by grace and at the same time living by the works of the law, but also to emphasize the fact that there is an ethical dimension to the gospel of grace.

7 "Race" is one great catchword that means different things to different people, and about which much ink and blood have been spilled. Despite this fact, no agreement seems to exist regarding what is a race, how it can be recognized, who constitute the several races, and how the different races are to be ranked in their relative abilities and closeness to some ideal referent (whether an ape, or a Creator). Thus, over the years, in an effort to abstract some defining traits as characteristic of a race, notable individuals—statesmen, scholars, scientists, etc.—have erroneously pointed to certain easily noted human features (such as color of skin or hair, striking appearance of face or body, unusual mode of speech or dress, shape of skull, temperament, etc.) as the permanent ineradicable hallmark of a race. For a critique of some of the different definitions of race, see Jacques Barzun's *Race: A Study in Superstition*, revised, with a new preface (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), in which he argues that the idea of race is a "fiction" (not a fact), a "fatal superstition" that has been put forward from time to time to advance some ideological goal; see also Ashley Montagu, *Race Science and Humanity* (New York: Van Nostrand Co., 1963).

8 George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man* (New York: Scribner's, 1965), p. 10, explains: "By and large, the people who have been the racists of the modern world have also been Christians or the heirs of Christian civilization. Among large numbers of Christians, racism has been the other faith or one of the other faiths."

9 Barzun, p. ix.

10 For a provocative analysis of what has happened to members of the Christian church, and what can be done to recapture their status as "resident aliens," see Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens: Life in the Christian Colony*, 9th printing (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992). Speaking on the subject of Christian social concern today, Hauerwas and Willimon argue: "In fact, much of what passes for Christian social concern today, of the left or of the right, is the social concern of a church that seems to have despaired of being the church. Unable through our preaching, baptism, and witness to form a visible community of faith, we content ourselves with ersatz Christian ethical activity—lobbying Congress to support progressive strategies, asking the culture

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

at large to be a little less racist, a little less promiscuous, a little less violent” (ibid., p. 80).

11 With this kind of worldliness the Churches have become, in the words of Jesus, salt without savor, useful only as it is “thrown out and trampled under foot by men” (Matt 5:13). Waldo Beach, “A Theological Analysis of Race Relations,” in Paul Ramsey, ed., *Faith and Ethics: The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1955), p. 218, has this in mind when he writes: “Seeking their life in quantity, they [churches] lose their life in quality and only earn the scorn of men.”

12 G. E. Simpson and J. M. Yinger, *Racial and Cultural Minorities, An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. 546.

13 Billy Graham, “Racism and the Evangelical Church,” *Christianity Today*, October 4, 1993, p. 27. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is not altogether immune from this infection of racism (see George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* [Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1992], p. 112). For a documentation of how racism has sometimes been manifested in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, see Richard Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1979), pp. 564-578; Calvin B. Rock, “A Better Way,” *Spectrum* 2:2 (Spring 1970): 21-30; Louis B. Reynold’s *We Have Tomorrow: The Story of American Seventh-day Adventists with an African Heritage* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1984), especially appendix B—“Actions From the Regional Advisory Committee in Miami, April 7-9, 1969” [pp. 362-370]; W. W. Fordham’s autobiography, *Righteous Rebel: The Unforgettable Legacy of a Fearless Advocate for Change* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1990).

14 It is rather ironical that politicians, the military, and promoters and managers of boxing, baseball, football, etc., whose activities are often at cross purposes with the teachings of Christianity, are doing more to heal racial divisions in society than are Christians. We may discredit their efforts by arguing that the reason they do so is because of the fear of legislative pressures or sanctions from secular authorities, or the violent protests of individuals who can no longer accept the racial status quo; we may even discount secular efforts at curbing racism on the grounds that these are done for some monetary gain. But as Frank Stagg reminds us, “To say that these have done it for money removes none of the sting, for it is a humiliation if a pagan for money effects good which a Christian fails to effect for love” (see Frank Stagg, *The Book of Acts* [Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1955], p. 124).

15 Wherever there have been different groups of people, ethnocentrism (the belief in the unique value and rightness of one’s own group, and hence the tendency to evaluate other races or groups by criteria that is specific to one’s own) has existed in some ways. But ethnocentrism is not necessarily racial; ethnocentrism turns into racism when an ethnic group believes that it is *innately* superior to all others and transposes that belief into serving the vested interest of that particular ethnic or racial group (e. g., fascism is nationalism built on racism).

16 With regard to the black/white form of racism, Cornel West, *Prophetic Fragments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), p. 100, observes: “The very category of ‘race’—denoting primarily skin color—was first employed as a means of classifying human bodies by François Bernier, a French physician, in 1684. The

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

first authoritative racial division of human kind is found in the influential *Natural System* (1735) of the preeminent naturalist Carolus Linnaeus.”

17 T. B. Maston, *The Bible and Race* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1959), p. 64.

18 Slavery was first accepted as an economic way of life, and later justified as a positive good that was sanctioned by Scripture itself as capable of effecting Christian social order based on the observance of mutual duty of slave to master and vice versa. On how Christianity later came to play a part, Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 96, has remarked: “Right from the very beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, conversions of the slaves to Christianity was viewed by the emerging nations of Western Christendom as a justification for enslavement of Africans. . . . Pangs of guilt over the cruelty inherent in enslaving fellow human beings were assuaged by emphasizing the grace of faith made available to Africans, who otherwise would die as pagans.”

19 Barzun, p. xix, argues that “since 1850, when industrialization broke traditional bonds and detached man from his native soil without affording him new loyalties, the idea of race has been put forward as a principle of political and emotional union.”

20 Alan Burns, *Colour Prejudice* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1948), p. 23 (cited by T. B. Maston, *The Bible and Race*, p. 64).

21 Herbert Spencer coined the phrase “survival of the fittest” in reference to the evolution of cultures and Darwin adopted the term to describe the outcome of the process of natural selection. E. Tobach, J. Gianutsos, et. al., *The Four Horsemen: Racism, Sexism, Militarism, and Social Darwinism* (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1974), pp. 99, 101, argue that the integration of this idea of Spencer with Darwin’s theory of the evolution of species, “produced a seemingly scientific rationalization of the 19th century European and American view of the peoples of the world as two populations, one of which was superior to the other by reason of physical and mental characteristics. . . . This rationalization came to be known as Social Darwinism. . . . [This view] arose during the most active period of industrialization and developing colonialism. The issue was the weeding out of the weak, the ill, the poor, the ‘socially unfit.’ . . . The ‘survival of the fittest’ was an appropriate concept for that goal.”

22 See Stephen T. Asma, “The New Social Darwinism: Deserving Your Destitution,” *The Humanist* 53:5 (September-October, 1993), p. 12. Asma argues that the social Darwinism (more accurately social Spencerism) of Herbert Spencer, and his American disciples (e.g., John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie), with its foundation in the “survival of the fittest” ethic, not only fueled Western capitalism but also provided “the ultimate justification for social passivity and acquiescence in the status quo” on matters pertaining to the poor, homeless, unemployed, etc. (ibid., p. 11).

23 Kelsey, pp. 22-23; cf. Adolf Hitler, “The Aryan Race Is Superior,” in Bruno Leone, ed., *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints* (St. Paul, MN: Greenhaven Press, 1986), pp. 211-214; Josiah Strong, “The Anglo-Saxon Race Should Colonize the World,” in *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 31-34; Albert J. Beveridge, “America Must Colonize,” in *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 20-25.

24 Kelsey, p. 9.

25 While Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau (1816-1882) argued that “The White Race is Superior” (see Bruno Leone, ed., *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp.

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

207-210), and Adolf Hitler, in his *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), insisted that “The Aryan Race is superior” (see *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 211-214), Albert J. Beveridge (1862-1927), a lawyer, US senator and historian, and Josiah Strong (1847-1916), a clergyman, social reformer and author, are two representatives of the views endorsing American or Anglo-Saxon racism (see Bruno Leone, ed., *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 20-25; 31-34). On the other hand, Elijah Muhammad, the founder of the Nation of Islam religion may be cited as one of those advocating the superiority of the Black race (see his “The Black Race is Superior,” *ibid.*, pp. 215-219); cf. the article by Leon Jaroff, “Teaching Reverse Racism,” *Time*, April 4, 1994, pp. 74-75, which also discusses some extremist views within the Afrocentric movement in which the history of black superiority is taught on the basis of melanism—the “science” of skin-pigmentation.

26 Manning Nash, “Race and the Ideology of Race,” *Current Anthropology* 3 (1962): 285-288; William J. Wilson, *Power, Racism and Privilege* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Donald L. Noel, ed., *The Origins of American Slavery and Racism* (Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1972).

27 For a discussion of the six major factors that shape a person’s racial outlook—historical, sociocultural, situational, psychodynamic, phenomenological, earned reputation—see for example, Gordon W. Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice*, 4th printing (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 206-218; cf. Robert Merton, “Discrimination and the American Creed,” in Robert M. MacIver, ed., *Discrimination and National Welfare* (New York: Harper, 1949).

28 Caleb Rosado, *Broken Walls* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press, 1990), p. 29, thus, defines racism (the “ideology of supremacy”) in this way: “Racism is both an attitude and an act of superiority that justifies its very existence by giving biological differences, such as skin color, texture of the hair, physical features, language, and cultural differences a negative meaning of inferiority. This negative meaning in turn legitimizes treating the other person as inferior to oneself.”

29 In other words, racism’s doctrine of biological determinism is “the glue” that defines and separates racial groups according to genes or “blood.” Speaking about biological determinism, R. C. Lewontin, “Foreword” in Richard M. Lerner, *Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice, and Genocide* (Pennsylvania, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), pp. vii-ix, states: “It makes the error of equating heritable with unchangeable, a biological mistake of the first magnitude”—a “pseudoscientific nonsense.”

30 Richard Lerner, *Final Solutions: Biology, Prejudice, and Genocide*, has identified biological determinism as the central dogma of the Nazi ideology or religion, without which Nazism could not have achieved its power and realized its racial program of holocaust. Lerner maintains that biological determinism is the doctrine that underlies the early 20th century embryological work of Ernst Haeckel, F. Lenz, the ideas of the European and American Social Darwinists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the American and European eugenics movement during the same period, the German racial hygiene movement (Alfred Ploetz, Wilhelm Schallmayer, Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche) of the first half of the twentieth century, and the contemporary ‘synthetic’ science of sociobiology in biology and in the behavioral and social sciences (J. P. Ruston, E. O. Wilson, R. Dawkins, Daniel Freedman).

31 It should be noted that it is not only those holding the reins of power who are racists. Kelsey’s distinction between “imperialistic racism” or “aggressive

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

racism” and “counter-racism” may be helpful here. In imperialistic/aggressive racism, racism is *in power*; it is full-blooded, in that “it can walk on its feet and strike with its feet because its spirit permeates the institutions of power”—political, military, economic, educational, ecclesiastical and other cultural institutions. “Counter racism” (others will say “reverse racism”), on the other hand is racism that is *out of power*. “It lacks feet to walk on and fists with which to strike. The spirit is present; the hope is compelling; but the will to power cannot find the institutions of power through which it can express itself” (Kelsey, pp. 10-11).

In the context of USA, since power has tended to reside in the hands of whites, imperialistic racism or institutional racism tends to be white racism. On the other hand since Blacks, Hispanics and Orientals, generally speaking, do not possess power, the racism exhibited by these groups tend to bear the characteristics of counter (or reverse) racism. Given the chance and the appropriate conditions of power, Black/Hispanic/Oriental racism can become as aggressive and imperialistic as white racism.

32 Roger Daniels and Harry H. L. Kitano, *American Racism: Exploration of the Nature of Prejudice* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1970), pp. 9-28, have argued that a racist society tends to go through four stages, each stage distinguishable by identifiable characteristics. In stage 1, a member of a minority (or despised) group finds himself avoided, stereotyped, and victimized by prejudice (informal rules operate here); in stages 2 and 3, he is deprived through discriminatory laws and insulated through segregation; finally in stage 4 the superior race adopts some “extraordinary” measures (isolation, exclusion and genocide. Historically this last stage has translated as apartheid, expulsion, exile, lynching, and concentration camps. Of these four stages, Daniels and Kitano maintain that stages two and three (discrimination/deprivation and segregation/insulation stages) “are *the most damaging steps in race relations*,” since they provide the necessary condition for stage four (ibid., p. 20).

33 In the past believers of racial supremacy were nakedly racist; they were not too squeamish in advocating and putting into practice views overtly racist: racial discrimination, segregation, etc. Today however, with racism outlawed in many countries, it has assumed a sophisticated form, and racists are more covert or subtle in expressing their views and in implementing racial policies. Legal racism may be dead, but institutional racism is still alive.

34 Ian Robertson, *Social Problems*, 2nd edition (New York: Random House, 1980), pp. 210-211.

35 Ibid., p. 211.

36 Thus, in the code of ethics for the Seventh-day Adventist minister, racism is condemned as a sinful practice (see, *Seventh-day Adventist Church Minister's Manual* [1992], p. 53); see also the document, “Christian Declaration on Race Relations,” that was adopted by the Southern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in session on March 1, 1970 (*Spectrum* 2:2 [Spring 1970]:53-55).

37 Since racism often expresses itself as a conflict among people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, attempts to understand the nature of racism have typically centered on an analysis of political, economic, and cultural factors. Not much attention has been given to the religious nature of racism. One notable exception is George D. Kelsey, *Racism and the Christian Understanding of Man*. To my knowledge, this work, to which I am indebted for insights expressed in this paper, is probably the most detailed analysis of racism as a faith system.

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

38 For a helpful discussion of the nature, characteristics, and types of religion, see Elizabeth K. Nottingham, *Religion and Society* (New York: Random House, 1954), pp. 1-11. Our analysis, in this section, of racism as a religion builds upon this work by Nottingham.

39 The following are adapted from the comparison between Christianity and Communism, provided by Richard J. Gehman, *African Traditional Religion in Biblical Perspective* (Kijabe, Kenya: Kesho Publications, 1989), p. 38.

40 The Frenchman, Count Joseph Arthur de Gobineau, is recognized as the “Father of Modern Racism” and one of the first contributors to the “science” of racism (see Bruno Leone, ed., *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, p. 207; Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* [New York: Weybright and Talley, 1970]). Gobineau used the word *Aryan*, a word that had been used by linguistic scholars for a number of related languages, including German and Latin to denote a supreme and original white race. David A. Rausch, *A Legacy of Hatred: Why Christians Must Not Forget the Holocaust*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), pp. 34-35, summarizes Gobineau’s views on race: “Gobineau claimed that race was the determining factor in the rise and fall of civilizations, postulating a hierarchy of humanity ranging from the superior white race to the inferior black race. Racial mixing had brought decline to the Latin and Semitic peoples, whereas Aryan Germans—the western Germanic tribes—held the key to a successful human destiny. These powerful people, he said, could be brought down only by the degenerative effect of race mixing” (cf. Biddiss, pp. 112-121). Building on the work of Gobineau, Adolf Hitler articulated in his *Mein Kampf*, “a book that became the bible of the Nazi movement in Germany,” why the Aryan race was superior to all others (see *Racism: Opposing Viewpoints*, p. 211).

The naturalistic world view is built on the assumption that nothing exists outside the material mechanical natural order. This world view which offers “the major competition” to the Christian world view (so Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992], p. 116), was “born in the eighteenth century, it came of age in the nineteenth and grew to maturity in the twentieth” (see James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* [Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1988], p. 82). For a discussion of how a world view shapes a person’s lifestyle, see Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, “Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle: A Clash of Worldviews,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 4 (Spring 1993): 129-150.

42 Ruth Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics* (New York: Viking Press, 1959), p. 98.

43 For example, those who justify racial segregation on Scriptural grounds often do so on the grounds of an alleged Biblical mandate (“God himself has separated the races by geographical barriers [Acts 17:26], differences in color and other racial characteristics [Gen 10:5, 32; 11:1-9], by His blessings and curses on Son’s of Noah [Gen 9:24-27], and by His notable example of making Israel separate from all other races—forbidding intermarriage of Israelites with others [Gen 24:3-4; 28:1; Deut 7:1-3, 6; Josh 23:12-13; Ezra 9:1-2, 10-12; 1 Kings 8:53; Exod 33:16]. But in actual fact, none of these prohibitions are grounded on race. For a discussion of some of the texts used to justify racism, see Cain Hope Felder, “Race, Racism and the biblical Narratives,” in *Stony the Road We Trod*, ed. Cain Hope Felder, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), pp. 127-145; T. B. Maston, *The Bible and Race*, pp. 105-117.

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

44 Talbert O. Shaw, "Racism and Adventist Theology," *Spectrum* 3:4 (Autumn 1971): 33.

45 Ellen G. White, *The Acts of Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), p. 238.

46 T. F. Torrance, *Calvin's Doctrine of Man* (London: Lutherworth Press, 1949), p. 24.

47 Waldo Beach, "A Theological Analysis of Race Relations," in *Faith and Ethics*, p. 211: "From the standpoint of classical Christian thought, of course, racial prejudice is not one of a catalogue of sins, but is a facet or expression of the single sin of pride, the rejection of the Infinite Sovereign Source of life and the attempt to set up as final some substitute sovereignty derived from the finite. Insofar as fallen man tends to make of himself or some collective projection of himself the center of love and value. Racial pride within and discriminatory practices are one ready way among many to 'exchange the truth of God for a lie,' and to worship the creature rather than the Creator."

48 James I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1993), p. 85.

49 SDA Fundamental Belief 7; for the full statement and a discussion of Adventists understanding of the fall, see *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington D.C.: Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), pp. 78-96.

50 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, pp. 392-393.

51 Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, p. 452, maintains that whereas everything in the world can be improved as long as the blood remains preserved in its purity, "Alone the loss of the purity of blood destroys the inner happiness forever; it eternally lowers man, and never again can its consequences be removed from body and mind." Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt against Civilization* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 88, concurs: "Racial impoverishment is the plague of civilization"; it is a "hideous disease" that has reduced "the proudest societies to charred and squalid ruin."

52 See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .*, pp. 98-105, for a summary discussion of "the great controversy" doctrine. For a more detailed and theological discussion of the theme, see the five volume Conflict of the Ages series by Ellen G. White [*Patriarchs and Prophets, Prophets and Kings, Desire of Ages, Acts of the Apostles, & the Great Controversy*] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1890-1917). The implication of "the great controversy" doctrine for ethics can be found in my "Contemporary Culture and Christian Lifestyle," pp. 143-147, see footnote #41.

53 Lewis C. Copeland, "The Negro as a Contrast Conception," in Edgar T. Thompson, ed., *Race Relations and the Race Problem* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 168.

54 Racial segregation must be distinguished from various forms of *voluntary* segregation or separation, that are functionally necessary to accomplish a task. Kelsey, p. 98 states: "[Racial] Segregation is born in hatred, fear, pride, and contempt. It knows nothing of love and does not aim at the general well-being; it is inspired by the spirit of pride and hostility, generated by the racist faith. Segregation is anticomunity. It is the structured will to deprive and reduce the life of the other. The appointed 'place' of the other is *below*, and the functions of the other are the structured servilities of society."

55 Gerhard Maier, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, trans. Robert W. Yarbrough (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1994), p. 23.

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

56 Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 173.

57 Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, p. 98; thus, Joseph Gobineau, the “Father of Modern Racism,” argues that history “shows us that all civilizations derive from the white race, that none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it, provided that this group itself belongs to the most illustrious branch of our species” (see Bruno Leone, *Racism: Opposing Views*, pp. 13, 210).

58 For an example of Eurocentric and Afrocentric reinterpretations of history, see Robert Hughes, *Culture of Complaint: The Fraying of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 102-147.

59 Joseph Fletcher is a leading proponent of this quality of life ethic. See his *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus, 1979), pp. 12-18, where he provides fifteen positive and five negative criteria for measuring the quality of one’s life and whether a person achieved humanhood; elsewhere, Fletcher reduces the criteria to “four indicators” (see his “Four Indicators of Humanhood—The Enquiry Matures,” *The Hastings Center Report* 4, no. 6 (December 1974): 4-7).

60 *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393 at 404. A detailed discussion of the *Dred Scott* decision is found in Curt Young, *The Least of These* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1984), pp. 1-20; see also Richard Fredericks, “Who Deserves to Live?: Toward an Ethic of Compassion,” *Signs of the Times*, April 1990, pp. 3-5.

61 Kelsey, p. 162.

62 Charles Darwin is often cited for laying the scientific foundation for this aspect of the racist faith. The second half of the title of Darwin’s famous book, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Survival of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*, was understood by some to justify the extermination of people of other races (see Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition*, pp. 47-48). A more blatant advocate of this view is Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1931), pp. 41-60.

63 Benedict, *Race: Science and Politics*, p. 98.

64 The eminent English scientist, Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin is credited with proposing in 1883 a new science-eugenics (from the Greek, meaning “good in birth” or “noble in heredity)—which aimed at ensuring that “the best” of human stock survived. As explained by D. J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. ix, this new science was intended to give “the more suitable race or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable.”

65 Everett Tilson, “Segregation and the Ten Commandments,” in Alfred T. Davies, *The Pulpit Speaks on Race* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1965), pp. 96-103.

66 For example, if the Black person lives in a slum, he “is charged not with poverty, but laziness. If he works in a kitchen the reason is not discrimination, but limitation. If he fails as an engineer the reason is not lack of education, but a shortage of intelligence. If he goes to jail the reason is not environment, but heredity” (*ibid.*, pp. 102-103).

67 Let us observe that in this account, there was a desperate need (the woman’s child needed help). Instead, those who were in a position to help chose to be apathetic to the need and therefore ignored the woman (“Jesus did not answer a word,” vs. 23). Secondly, pressure was put on Jesus, by His closest associates, to refuse offering the needed help; because it was inconvenient (“she

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

keeps crying after us,” the disciples said); here is illustrated how pressure is often applied so that people will conform to ambient expectations, and show an unwillingness to go against popular opinion, etc., when they could no longer pretend the need was not there. Also, there was a shift of the responsibility to others (notice in verse 24 that when even Jesus, felt compelled to do something about it, he indicated that the specific need of the woman could only be met by someone else—“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel”; the implication was that, he could only offer help to the in-race). Finally, they justified their reason for denying the help by first labeling the woman as a “dog” and then rationalizing that it was not appropriate to give what is due to humans to a subhuman (dog).

68 White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 402-403.

69 Maston, *The Bible and Race*, p. 58. Some parallels can be drawn between the racial bitterness between Jews and Samaritans and the racial conflicts between blacks and whites in USA (see *ibid.*, pp. 53-67). In both instances, (1) racial division is manifested in a “We-You” relationship. Thus, the Jews proclaimed in John 8:33, “we are descendants of Abraham,” and charged Jesus (and hence, anyone who did not agree with them), “you are a Samaritan” (John 8:33, 48, RSV); in this “we-you” relationship, the Jews saw themselves as the favored race, and the Samaritans as the unfavored race (an incipient superior/inferior race dichotomy). (2) Like our modern racism, the cause of this racial prejudice had some historical basis (cultural, religious, political, economic—2 Kngs 17:24; Ezra 4, Neh 13:28). (3) Because of the racial prejudice between the two groups of people, “Jews have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9, RSV)—a kind of segregation in which Jews had a difficult time associating with, offering and accepting food and drink from Samaritans, and even rendering helping to wounded persons of the opposite race—as the story of the good Samaritan suggests (cf. Luke 10:25-37; 17:11-18). (4) For the Jews, Samaritans were the embodiment of evil; thus, the religious leaders told Jesus: “You are a Samaritan and have a demon” (John 8:48, RSV). Even the disciples of Christ were not totally free of this racial prejudice; on one occasion James and John asked Jesus to call fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans. (5) But the racial prejudice of Jews against Samaritans was not entirely one-sided; the Samaritans also were prejudiced against the Jews. This is reflected in the statement of the Samaritan woman at the well, when she asked Christ: “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria” (John 4:9, RSV). This reverse racism on the part of the Samaritans was equally as sinful and deadly as that perpetrated by those on the other side. It led to the creation of a myth spiritual superiority in which, for example, Samaritans considered their form of worship to be superior to all others (John 4:20), a view that may have contributed to their initial rejection of Jesus (Luke 9:52, 53).

70 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:225; “No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere.” Cf. *idem.*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 386.

71 With respect to the despised Samaritans, when Jesus first sent out the twelve, He specifically forbade them to preach to the Gentiles—particularly the Samaritans (Matt 10:5)—apparently because He knew that His followers were not adequately prepared at this time “to preach the gospel, or to do good works, either

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

among Samaritans or Gentiles. Their hearts were too narrow, their prejudices too strong: there was too much of the Jew, too little of the Christian, in their character.” (See A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* [New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1929], p. 101). But after His resurrection and shortly before His ascension, Jesus made it clear that the barriers of race must be overcome as they preached to all the world, including Samaria.

72 Maston, *The Bible and Race*, p. 62. He continues by saying: “What about us—do we need the message of ‘and Samaria’? Do we have our Samaritans, or areas of prejudice? If so, Jesus would have us cross over the border. There are no national or racial lines in his Commission” (ibid.).

73 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, pp. 402-403.

74 *Seventh-day Adventist Minister's Manual*, p. 53.

75 Will D. Campbell, *Race and the Renewal of the Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1962), p. 13.

76 Abraham J. Heschel, “The Religious Basis of Equality of Opportunity—The Segregation of God,” in Matthew Ahmann, ed., *Race: Challenge to Religion* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1963), p. 56.

77 Thus, Kyle Haselden, *The Racial Problem in Christian Perspective* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 49-50, notes that, a white racist, just like racists from other races, has often “restricted the scope of his moral responsibility to members of his own race and reduced the intensity of his ethic to a strictly personal pietism” which ignores Christian responsibility for the despised race. This compartmentalization of morality on the part of Christian racists explains why “the extremes of pietism and racial discrimination occupy the same territory” (ibid., p. 50).

78 See also, Sakae Kubo, *The God of Relationships* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1993), pp. 33-49.

79 *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .*, pp. 73-74.

80 C. H. Dodd, *Christ and the New Humanity*, Facet Books Social Ethics Series 6 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1965), p. 2.

81 *Epistle to Diognetus*, pp. 5-6, quoted by C. H. Dodd, *Christ and the New Humanity*, Facet Books Social Ethics Series 6 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1965), pp. 3-4.

82 See Richard Schwarz, pp. 564-578; Calvin B. Rock, “A Better Way,” pp. 21-30; Louis B. Reynold, pp. 362-370.

83 Schwarz, pp. 571-572.

84 George R. Knight, *Anticipating the Advent: A Brief History of Seventh-day Adventists* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), p. 112. Calvin Rock, “A Better Way,” pp. 22-24, has also offered some psychological, sociological, and theological factors that have historically led to white racism in the Adventist Church. Among other factors, Rock points to political expediency (the fear of a loss of prestige, finance, status and even loss of job) should racism be eliminated; an evangelistic strategy that is directed to the upper-lower and lower-middle class—the segment most threatened by racial parity; a certain kind of conservatism and fundamentalism that ignores the ethical dimension of the biblical doctrines; and a tendency to ignore social issues on the pretext that the situation is too hopeless for any meaningful change.

85 Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

86 Cf., Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:214.

87 There is a sense in which we all are prisoners of our time and the cultures of our age. Consequently we do not always see some aspects of our respective

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

cultures, however hard we try, until we are made to stand outside of it, and measure it by the standards that are not part of it. In order to address the contemporary problem of racism in the Church, it may be necessary to look at the subject as it manifested itself during the NT times. From the vantage point of the past, we may be able to assess our present situation, and thereby avoid the inescapable mind-set in which we have been set. Testing our contemporary presuppositions by the NT Church can help us avoid some mistakes on the subject of race relations (cf. Packer, "The Comfort of Conservatism," in *Power Religion*, ed. Michael Scot Horton, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992), p. 291, where, in his discussion of the benefits of the Christian Tradition, he speaks about the sense of realism Christians gain when they learn from the experiences of the past).

88 David A. Rausch, *Legacy of Hatred*, p. 1.

89 That Peter was not alone in "perceiving" that God is no respecter of persons is indicated by the fact that those who had come with Peter from Joppa "were amazed" at seeing the Gentiles in Cornelius home receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:45). Apparently, they thought that Gentiles were not worthy of such a gift. Even more, we are told in Acts 11 that when the brethren in Jerusalem heard the news, they were very upset. Therefore, Peter's statement of Acts 10:34 is a clear indication that the early Jewish Christians failed to fully grasp the fact that no form of ethnic or racial prejudice is justifiable under the gospel.

90 The truth of God being no respecter of persons, and His insistence that His followers be impartial, are recorded in several places in the OT Scriptures (Deut 10:18, Job 34:19, 2 Chron 19:7). Peter and the others may have known this Bible truth, and their association with Jesus provided a living demonstration of this truth to them.

91 They had bought so much into the established societal norms ("For we know that it is an unlawful thing for me who is Jew to . . . [Acts 10:28; 11:1, 2]) that if they had their own way, they would certainly have maintained segregated churches on Sabbaths, they would have preferred to run segregated schools in the same towns and cities, and wherever possible, would have had segregated dining hall facilities (Gal 2:11ff). But for the Spirit of God, the privileged group in the early church (Jews) would have wanted to control the leadership and resources of the Church (Acts 6), paying little attention to the needs of the deprived members and making little effort to train leaders among the unfavored group.

92 Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), pp. 149-211, suggest that American Seventh-day Adventism tends to identify with the Republican Party.

93 George Kelsey, "Racial Patterns and the Churches," pp. 74-76.

94 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1956), p. 18.

95 W. L. Emmerson, *The Bible Speaks*, 2 vols. (Warburton, Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing Co., 1949), 2:439, attributes the above statement to Henry Ward Beecher.

96 Spencer Perkins, "Integration Versus Reconciliation," *Christianity Today*, October 4, 1993, p. 23.

97 Equality is a concept introduced by scientists in their effort to define the basic relationship between some separate items. What is not generally recognized, however, is that the concept of equality is not scientific; it is neither provable nor disprovable. It is valid only when one *assumes* it. In other words, the idea of

PIPIM: THE RELIGION CALLED RACISM

equality must be accepted by faith. As applied to human beings, individuals and groups are said to be equal solely because they are so declared. The Christian must therefore be clear in his or her mind regarding who it is that grants that equality and on what basis it is granted.

98 Ontological equality (suggesting that human beings are equal in their standing before God, in that they were all created in the image of God, they are all sinners, they all need salvation through Christ, they all have been called to the same destiny) refers solely to God's action and purposes, and not to any intrinsic qualities that human beings possess by themselves; it is a gift from God. Ontological equality must not be confused with functional equality (implying equality of ability, knowledge, skill, power, position, treatment, etc.). The Bible proclaims an ontological equality (cf. Gal 3:28), not a functional equality (cf. 1 Cor 12; Rom 12: 3-8).

99 Ellen White: "Their [Blacks'] voices are to be heard in the representative assemblies (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9:207).

100 *Southern Work*, pp. 11-12; "Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done them [colored race]" (ibid., p. 13); "The American nation owes a debt of love to the colored race, and God has ordained that they should make restitution for the wrong they have done them in the past. Those who have taken no active part in enforcing slavery upon the colored people are not relieved from the responsibility of making special efforts to remove, as far as possible, the sure result of their enslavement" (ibid., p. 74); "The Lord demands restitution from the churches in America. . . The Lord calls upon you to restore to his people the advantages which they have so long been deprived" (ibid., p. 144).

101 Ellen White: "special efforts should be made to increase the force of colored workers" (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9:207). "Among the negro race, there are many who have talent and ability" and "Many wise, Christian men will be called to work" (ibid., p. 202).

102 Ellen White: "Many of the colored race are rich in faith and trust. God sees among them precious jewels that will one day shine out brightly. . ." (*Testimonies for the Church*, 7:229).

103 It is very remarkable that this biblical truth is taught to our children at a very early age. The fact that this truth is put in a song, and repeated every week, suggests that adults expect their children to remember this cardinal teaching of Christianity, as they grow and live in a world torn by ethnic and racial hatred. It is therefore, a matter of surprise that by the time the children become adults and take their places in the pews and pulpits of the Church, and at the desks in classrooms and administrative offices of the Church's institutions, this truth is either misunderstood or largely forgotten, ignored, discredited, or even rejected. And with this attitude towards the theology undergirding the truth of God's love for the "Red and yellow, black and white," the church is left in a position in which it is totally incapable of confronting ethnic and racial prejudice and bigotry within and without the Church. Abdicating this responsibility, the Church then waits upon an ungodly society to demonstrate and prescribe ways by which racism should be addressed.

104 The religion that was established by the life and message of the Incarnate Christ is one in which there is no caste, "a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God." See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:225 (cf. idem, *Ministry of Healing*, pp. 25-26).

JOURNAL OF THE ADVENTIST THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

105 David A. Rausch, *Legacy of Hatred*, p. 15.

106 White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:209; “Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors. For Christ’s sake, let us do something now” (*Southern Work*, p. 54).