



CHAPTER 2

A BRIDGE TOO FAR

CHARLES WARE

When we look at the ugliness of racism and the impact of evolution, we realize there is a solution to the problem of racism — and that is biblical principles and scientific fact.

— Zig Ziglar

The United States has been infected by the disease of racism from its very inception. In the pages ahead, we will take a brief tour of prejudice, hatred, and distrust on American soil. The tour will be short and the places we visit are not by any means exhaustive, but along the way we will see much of the fruit of Darwin's plantation.

But please remember that racism is a consequence of a cycle of distrust and hatred with many facets. So while the effects of Darwinian thinking should not be underestimated, this is not the *only* cause of the racism we endure today. Long before Darwin we find incidents like the Trail of Tears, when in 1838 the Cherokee

Nation was forced, as part of the Indian Removal Act, to begin a migration of over 800 miles. (In the process, 4,000 men, women, and children of the 15,000 Cherokee Nation died from hunger, disease, exhaustion, and hypothermia.)

At the central core of racism we find the sinful hearts of men living in a fallen world. This fundamental problem has no earthly cure. There is no speech that can be given, no law that can be passed, and no publicity campaign that can solve it. Only the truth of God's Word combined with the strength of God's Holy Spirit living within us can bring us victory over this sin.

So in the secular world we should not be surprised when racism rears its ugly head. We should not be surprised that federal governmental policies and local civil movements have not been able to suppress it entirely. When appropriate, we can heed the call to social action and to political activism that can aid us in suppressing racism.

Racism in the American *Church*, however, whether it stems from Darwinism or elsewhere, grows when the misinterpretation and misapplication of Scripture causes cultural division rather than biblical unity. To that end, much can be done. God's Word is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb. 4:12). When that truth is interpreted properly and applied with passion, I see bright hope and optimism in the battle against the darkness of racist and evolutionary thinking.

HISTORY AND HOPE

For almost 30 years I have been passionately promoting reconciliation among various ethnic and cultural groups, especially within the Church. I am an African American and my wife is "white." We have six children, four biological and two

adopted. Our 25-year-old son has been a quadriplegic since February 1998. I am president of a Bible college and senior pastor of a church (both of which are ethnically and culturally diverse). Twenty-four hours a day I live within a diverse environment, and I love it.

As I contribute to this book, I am concerned that you understand that Ken and I strive to base our views upon faithful and accurate biblical wisdom:

- First, the Bible is accepted as the inspired, inerrant word of God.
- Second, the Bible is to be interpreted from a literal, grammatical, and historical perspective.
- Third, the Bible can be and has been misinterpreted, resulting in the injustice and oppression of certain people through history.

The challenge is that historically the Bible has been used by many to justify the slavery of African Americans! From the time this country was being established, this is what some of their arguments have sounded like:

- Abraham, the “father of faith,” and all the patriarchs held slaves without God’s disapproval (Gen. 21:9–10).
- Canaan, Ham’s son, was made a slave to his brothers (Gen. 9:24–27).
- The Ten Commandments mention slavery twice, showing God’s implicit acceptance of it (Exod. 20:10, 17).

- Slavery was widespread throughout the Roman world, and yet Jesus never spoke against it.
- The apostle Paul specifically commanded slaves to obey their masters (Eph. 6:5–8).
- Paul returned a runaway slave, Philemon, to his master (Phil. 12).

Such thinking became the foundation for “white superiority” and segregation of the so-called “races.” But while the Bible acknowledged and regulated slavery, there were some striking differences between “race”-based slavery and biblical instructions for believers. Neither the Old nor New Testaments attaches *racial* stigma to slaves. (For example, the Egyptian bondage of the children of Israel resulted from their number, not because of skin color.) Slavery in the Bible was very different from slavery in America. Still, slaveholders argued that the principle of slavery was justified for three basic reasons:

1. The Africans are a distinct race of people, they cannot mix with whites and must exist as a separate class.
2. The Africans are, as a class, inferior to the whites in intellectual and moral development, they are incompetent to self-government.
3. The Israelites subdued heathen people groups, it is appropriate to make domestic slaves of inferior people.

The debate within the Christian community over slavery led to splits within major denominations. Many of the splits left the more fundamental/evangelical groups supporting race-based

slavery, while more liberal groups were abolitionists.¹ For example, the issue of slavery divided the Baptists into two groups in 1845 — the Southern Baptists (who were pro-slavery) and the American Baptists (who were abolitionists).²

Race-based slavery led to fractured relationships between “blacks” and “whites” within church and denominations as well. This tension reached a peak one Sunday when African Americans were forbidden to pray in the presence of Caucasians. This event led to the founding of the historic Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. The history of the church states:

When officials at St. George’s MEC [*Methodist Episcopal Church*] pulled blacks off their knees while praying, FAS [*Free African Society*] members discovered just how far American Methodists would go to enforce racial discrimination against African Americans. Hence, these members of St. George’s made plans to transform their mutual aid society into an African congregation. Although most wanted to affiliate with the Protestant Episcopal Church, Allen led a small group who resolved to remain Methodists. In 1794, Bethel AME [*African Methodist Episcopal*] was dedicated with Allen as pastor. To establish Bethel’s independence from interfering white Methodists, Allen, a former Delaware slave, successfully sued in the Pennsylvania courts in 1807 and 1815 for the right of his congregation to exist as an independent institution. Because black Methodists in other middle Atlantic communities

1. *Christian History*, issue 33, vol. II, no. 1: p. 26, 27.

2. *Ibid.*

encountered racism and desired religious autonomy, Allen called them to meet in Philadelphia to form a new Wesleyan denomination, the AME.³

In the midst of this dark period in our history, we must not forget the sparks of light that brightened the darkened sky like shooting stars. A monumental shift in governmental policy took place on January 1, 1863. When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, it was a landmark that altered the course of racism in the United States. Due to a multiracial effort, slavery had been made illegal. This legal victory came at the cost of staining U.S. soil with the blood of its own sons and daughters and set the country in a new direction.

In honesty, however, the legal abolishment of slavery did little to unify the church across racial/ethnic lines.

It is very interesting to note that during this same season of history, Darwinian theories were beginning to make their way to American shores. Without the legal ability to enforce slavery, many people turned to the theories of Darwin to justify racism in its many forms. They began to use evolution as justification of their views that African Americans were an inferior “race” and a “sub-species” that was not really fully human and not deserving of fair and equal treatment. “Jim Crow laws,” for example, were often fueled by evolutionary ideas:

Jim Crow laws were laws that imposed racial segregation. They . . . sprouted up in the late nineteenth century after Reconstruction and lasted until the 1960s.

3. African Methodist Episcopal Church website: <http://www.ame-church.com/about-us/history.php>

Prior to the enactment of Jim Crow laws, African Americans enjoyed some of the rights granted during Reconstruction. . . . However, rights dwindled after Reconstruction ended in 1877. By 1890, whites in the North and South became less supportive of civil rights and racial tensions began to flare. Additionally, several Supreme Court decisions overturned Reconstruction legislation by promoting racial segregation.

The Supreme Court . . . ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment did not prohibit individuals and private organizations from discriminating on the basis of race. However, it was the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that led the way to racial segregation.

. . . in 1896 the Supreme Court . . . held that "separate but equal" accommodations did not violate . . . rights. . . . The Court provided further support for separate accommodations when it ruled . . . that separate schools were valid even if comparable schools for blacks were not available.

. . . Southern states passed laws that restricted African Americans access to schools, restaurants, hospitals, and public places. . . . Laws were enacted that restricted all aspects of life and varied from state to state.⁴

The laws built an official government system of segregation between those of differing skin shade. Here are just a few examples:

4. <http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/jimcrowlaw1/a/creationjimcrow.htm>

- In Louisiana: “Any person who shall rent any part of any such building to a Negro person or a Negro family when such building is already in whole or in part in occupancy by a white person or white family, or vice versa when the building is in occupancy by a Negro person or Negro family, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.”
- In Florida: “All marriages between a white person and a Negro, or between a white person and a person of Negro descent to the fourth generation inclusive, are hereby forever prohibited.”
- In Georgia: “It shall be unlawful for any amateur white baseball team to play baseball on any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of a playground devoted to the Negro race, and it shall be unlawful for any amateur colored baseball team to play baseball in any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of any playground devoted to the white race.”

The South became a checkerboard of “black” and “white” as African Americans were segregated from Caucasians on public transportation, in schools, and in the church. Adult males were even prevented from exercising the right to vote. By 1910, the Jim Crow way of life was fully established in every state in the former Confederacy. This legitimized and further institutionalized racism against African Americans.

But this wasn't just a governmental, civic problem. The fundamental/evangelical church was foundering in this sea of racism, and some of these struggles continue today. For example, a number of both Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures

have been used to say that God forbids interracial marriage. These theories have been taught as truth in many Christian groups, and until fairly recently, it was even taught at a respected Christian university. I have sought to examine a number of these biblical texts within their context in my book *Prejudice and the People of God*.⁵

Due to beliefs that interracial marriage was at worst sin, and at best unwise, many fundamental/evangelical leaders supported segregated communities and segregated churches. In 1956, evangelist John R. Rice expressed the following thoughts:

But I say frankly that many things are worse than these, and most intelligent people would prefer to have Jim Crow laws than to have unrestrained intermarriage between the races. Christians everywhere should try to avoid oppression and take particular pains to be kind and thoughtful and unselfish in all inter-race relationships.⁶

Socially, it is better for both Negroes and whites to run with their own kind and intermarry with their own kind. The mixing of races widely differing is almost never wise. . . . Thus if a girl would do wrong to marry a Negro boy, she would be wrong to keep company with him, mixing regularly with him in a social life.⁷

5. A. Charles Ware, *Prejudice and the People of God: How Revelation and Redemption Lead to Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001).

6. John R. Rice, *Negro and White: Desegregation — Right or Wrong? How Much? How Soon? Principles and Problems in the Light of God's Word* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1956), p. 7.

7. John R. Rice, *Dr. Rice, Here is My Question* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1962), p. 240.

In 1961, M.R. Dehaan expressed his view about interracial marriage with these words:

I feel Negroes and Whites should never intermarry, but where possible live in their own social and religious groups and churches. . . . as far as the intimate relationship and fellowship which comes by living in the same sections in a community, I do not believe that the time is ripe.⁸

It should be acknowledged that Rice and DeHaan were seeking to deal with cultural realities of their day. Both expressed concern about oppression of African Americans, but they also supported, at least for their time, the segregation of the so-called human “races.”

During this time, African Americans were subjected to great injustices in the land of the free. From Jim Crow laws to scientific experimentation, African Americans were denied many of their basic rights as United States citizens and given little of the respect they deserved as human beings.

This caused a growing mistrust between African Americans and the mainstream fundamental/evangelical Christians. While the African Americans suffered and struggled, the Church was largely silent and indifferent to their plight. The reaction of African Americans to the outright racism and silence was predictable. As the Bible says:

*A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city,
and contentions are like the bars of a citadel* (Prov. 18:19).

8. M.R. DeHaan, *Dear Doctor: I Have A Problem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Radio Bible Class, 1961), p. 266–267.

Some became hostile against the Bible and Christianity. The Black Muslims' leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, in *Message to the Blackman* proclaimed:

Christianity is one of the most perfect black-slavemaking religions on our planet. It has completely killed the so-called Negroes mentally.⁹

Muhammad further asserts, "The Holy Qur-an is a book which white Christianity never has and probably never will introduce to the so-called Negroes. They love for you to read the book (Bible) which they have fixed for you and desire that you never be able to understand it."¹⁰

Many African-American believers began to deeply distrust the biblical scholarship of their Caucasian brothers and sisters. But some, rather than throwing out the Bible, were driven to search the Scriptures for themselves, to see what it said about the so-called "races" and the freedom and affirmation that the Scriptures proclaim for all human beings.

Motivated by a combination of frustration regarding current conditions and a dream for a different future, they began to unite and take their cause to the streets.

March 7, 1965

The rays of the Alabama sun had already begun to heat the pavement beneath the feet of the marchers when they started to move. The air, thick with southern humidity, was filled with a mixture of joy, celebration, and defiance. Five hundred started

9. Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (Chicago, IL: Muhammad Mosque of Islam No. 2, 1965), p. 70.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 71.

the march that day. Five hundred had had enough — enough intimidation, enough of the discrimination, enough of being treated as subhuman second-class citizens in a country that claimed to be free and equal.

They carried no weapons except the determination in their hearts. They asked for nothing special; they sought only to proclaim the truth that *all men had been created equal*. They wanted only to claim the right they had *to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness*. In particular, as legal citizens of the greatest democracy on the planet, they were moving toward the capital of their state, seeking only the right to vote.

But that day, they had moved too far. Seeking to bridge the gap between their rights as human beings and the rampant discrimination that encompassed their families, they pushed beyond what the oppressors would tolerate. Historians remember that day as “Bloody Sunday.” At Edmund Pettus Bridge, the billy clubs, tear gas, and bullwhips of state and local law men fell upon the defenseless marchers. That Sunday, the blood flowed, the bone was broken, and the flesh was ripped and tattered. . . . On that day, the marchers encountered “a bridge too far,” a racial canyon that could not be crossed due to a political and judicial system designed to deny certain citizens their constitutional rights because of the shade of their skin.

The bridge where defeat was experienced still stood waiting for the next attempt to cross. On March 21, just two weeks later, 3,200 marchers again began to move through the Alabama morning. By the time they reached the capital, their singing ranks had swelled to over 25,000. On August 6, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to overcome

legal barriers that prevented African Americans from exercising their right to vote.

The climax of the struggle against Jim Crow laws and discrimination was the passage of the Civil Rights Act. With the stroke of a pen, legalized segregation and discrimination became history. Not long after, so-called “interracial marriages” were illegal in many states until the Supreme Court declared such legal restrictions to be unconstitutional in 1967 in the case of *Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia*.

But a mere change of law never means a change of heart.

Beyond 1965

Many believed that with the signing of the Civil Rights Act the bridge had been crossed and racial wounds had been healed. Clearly, the roots of racism go deeper than the laws of the land — even in the Church.

Some African Americans who acknowledge the oppression and exploitation of African Americans by Caucasian Christians express their hostility more at “white” *scholarship* than the Bible and Christianity as a whole. Latta R. Thomas explains:

To understand this wave of Black hostility toward the Bible, one needs to give deep thought to the fact that for several centuries in Western countries the Bible has been *used* — and to a degree still is — as an instrument for supporting Black oppression and exploitation.

. . . to reach the minds and hearts of Black people in America . . . who have some honest doubts and suspicions due to the ways the Bible has been misinterpreted and manipulated to support Black oppression. Black

people must find out for themselves . . . what the Bible is really about. For it is a book in which it is recorded that *the* God and Sovereign of all history is always in the business of creating and freeing a people to clear the earth of injustice, bigotry, hatred, human slavery, political corruption, tyranny, sin, illness, and poverty.¹¹

Thomas argued that it was necessary to investigate biblical themes that address the plight of many blacks. Such an emphasis could not be trusted to “white” scholars. Distrust of “white” leaders and scholars was voiced by other “black” leaders such as James H. Cone, who wrote:

. . . as we examine what contemporary theologians are saying, we find that they are silent about the enslaved condition of black people. Evidently they see no relationship between black slavery and the Christian gospel. Consequently, there has been no sharp confrontation of the gospel with white racism. There is, then, a desperate need for a *black theology*, a theology whose sole purpose is to apply the freeing power of the gospel to black people under white oppression.¹²

A “white” and “black” scholarship around biblical themes most advantageous to respective groups was emerging. As God’s Word, rather than the wisdom of men, is planted in the souls of men and women, the seeds of truth begin to take root and grow.

11. Latta R. Thomas, *Biblical Faith and the Black American* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1976), p. 12, 13.

12. Harry H. Singleton III, *Black Theology and Ideology: Deideological Dimensions in the Theology of James H. Cone* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), p. 31.

True and lasting cultural change can occur when a proper theology is accepted by all.

THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

As a new generation of all believers begins to lead the Church, we are seeing definitive progress, but we still struggle with living together. On the cover of a series of reprinted *Indianapolis Star* articles from February 21–28, 1993, entitled “Blacks & Whites: Can We All Get Along?” is the following quote: “There aren’t any race relations. We are two different communities in two different worlds that have hardly anything to do with each other.”¹³ In 1997, Tom Brokaw hosted a powerful documentary on *Dateline NBC* entitled, “Why Can’t We Live Together?” Brokaw looked at race relations and explained the hidden realities of racial separation in America’s suburbs.

And still today, racial extremists’ faulty interpretation of Scripture is used to justify their racism, just as Darwin used faulty interpretation of scientific fact to justify evolution. Various Christian groups still claim that the Bible supports white superiority and segregation. Extreme examples include the Ku Klux Klan and the Kingdom Identity.

The homepage for the Ku Klux Klan says that it is a U.S. Supreme Court recognized and protected Christian organization that received a charter from U.S. Congress because of their great moral and good Christian behavior. It states, “We come in the name of THE LORD God JESUS CHRIST, Amen.”¹⁴ Their doctrinal statement of beliefs includes this statement:

13. *Blacks & Whites: Can We All Get Along?* *Indianapolis Star*, February 21–28, 1993, cover page.

14. Imperial Klans of America, opening page; website: www.kkkk.net

WE BELIEVE the White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred people to be God's true, literal Children of Israel. Only this race fulfills every detail of Biblical Prophecy and World History concerning Israel and continues in these latter days to be heirs and possessors of the Covenants, Prophecies, Promises and Blessings YHVH God made to Israel. This chosen seedline making up the "Christian Nations" (Gen. 35:11; Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26) of the earth stands far superior to all other peoples in their call as God's servant race (Isa. 41:8, 44:21; Luke 1:54). Only these descendants of the 12 tribes of Israel scattered abroad (James 1:1; Deut. 4:27; Jer. 31:10; John 11:52) have carried God's Word, the Bible, throughout the world (Gen. 28:14; Isa. 43:10–12, 59:21), have used His Laws in the establishment of their civil governments and are the "Christians" opposed by the Satanic Anti-Christ forces of this world who do not recognize the true and living God (John 5:23, 8:19, 16:2–3).¹⁵

Julian Bond, an African-American civil rights leader, said, "For many years the KKK quite literally could get away with murder. The Ku Klux Klan was an instrument of fear, and black people, Jews, and even 'white' civil rights workers knew that the fear was intended to control us, to keep things as they had been in the South through slavery, and after that ended, through Jim Crow. This fear of the Klan was very real, because for a long time the Klan had the power of Southern society on their side."¹⁶

15. Doctrinal statement, *Imperial Klans of America*; website: <http://www.kkkk.net/doctrinalstatements.htm>

16. Julian Bond, "Why Study the Klan?" *The Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism and Violence*, Sara Bullard, editor (Montgomery, AL: Klanwatch, 1991), p. 5.

While the laws of the land have changed, the heart of the Klan has not, and it continues to misuse the Holy Word of God to support its claims.

The Christian Identity Movement is a white supremacist and religious group that shares much of the Ku Klux Klan ideology. In the doctrinal statement of the Kingdom Identity Ministries (which sounds very fundamental/evangelical), the group affirms the authority of Scripture, the Trinity, salvation by grace, and other theological points. A closer look, however, reveals a deadly virus when the group addresses the issue of race:

We believe the White, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and kindred people to be God's true, literal Children of Israel. . . . This chosen seedline making up the "Christian Nations" (Gen. 35:11; Isa. 62:2; Acts 11:26) of the earth stands far superior to all other peoples in their call as God's servant race (Isa. 41:8; 44:21; Luke 1:54)¹⁷

We believe that the Man Adam . . . is father of the White race only. . . .¹⁸

Their use of the Bible and Christian terms weaves a deceptive web that binds many into racist attitudes and segregationist actions. *The Christian Research Journal* reported:

Christians sometime connect with this movement because of Identity's espousal of issues such as right-to life and anti-communism. . . . It is important for Christians

17. Doctrinal Statement of Beliefs, *Kingdom Identity Ministries*, Harrison, Arkansas; website: <http://www.kingidentity.com/doctrine.htm>

18. Ibid.

to . . . understand Identity's false and racist teachings. For the sake of non-Christians, it is also important for Christians to differentiate between biblical Christianity and Identity. Finally, it is the moral duty of Christians to stand against the evil intent of this form of white supremacist teaching.¹⁹

The article went so far as to define the group as:

. . . a religious movement uniting many of the white supremacist groups in the United States. Identity's teachers promote racism and sometimes violence. Their roots are deeply embedded in movements such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis. They consider themselves true Israel and view the Jews as half-devils and arch enemies. They believe all but the white race are inferior creations.²⁰

Note that these are fellow *creationists* who refuse to bow to the culture of secular pluralism and dare to stand on Scripture. The problem, however, is that they use the Bible to try to support their pre-existing discriminatory and racist beliefs. The verses they use to "prove" their position are either taken out of context or severely misinterpreted.

While some creationists are racist *in spite* of the biblical evidence, recent controversy within the scientific community shows how racism is *inherent* in evolutionary thought, and even the most respected of scientists are not immune. Geneticist Dr. James Watson, who, with Dr. Francis Crick, worked out the structure

19. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

20. Viola Larson, "Identity: A 'Christian' Religion for White Racists," *Christian Research Journal*, vol. 15, no. 2 (Fall 1992): p. 27.

of DNA (a remarkable achievement for which he was awarded a Nobel Prize) is one such scientist. During his visit to Britain in October 2007, Dr. Watson created a storm when he made comments on genetics that contained connotations of racism.²¹

That Watson is an expert geneticist is beyond doubt. Where he comes unstuck is in his reliance on the theory of evolution. The remark that offended was this:

There is no firm reason to anticipate that the intellectual capacities of peoples geographically separated in their evolution should prove to have evolved identically. Our wanting to reserve equal powers of reason as some universal heritage of humanity will not be enough to make it so.²²

This statement was made in the context of his implication that those of African extraction are less intelligent than those of European extraction. His views have been rightly condemned by other evolutionary scientists. In the same newspaper article, Professor Steven Rose, of the Open University, said:

This is Watson at his most scandalous. . . . If he knew the literature in the subject he would know he was out of his depth scientifically, quite apart from socially and politically.

Most evolutionists would share Rose's non-racist views and would be equally shocked by Watson. Nevertheless, it is only fair to point out that Watson is actually being more consistent with

21. [Ftp://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/10/19/#fnList_1_1](http://www.answersingenesis.org/articles/2007/10/19/#fnList_1_1)

22. Ibid.

evolutionary theory than Rose. As soon as one believes that human beings have evolved from creatures of lesser intelligence, it is an easy corollary to assume that some people groups are more evolved than others. Watson repeated these views in the same newspaper (*The Independent*) on October 19, 2007, while protesting that this was not a comment on the “inferiority or superiority” of any people group. Yet we contend that a comment on the supposed intelligence levels of different people groups is clearly a value judgment.

Contrary to the belief of evolutionists, there is actually only one race — Adam’s race. And Adam’s race includes “black” people, “white” people — all human beings everywhere.

On the legal front, important steps have been taken in the right direction, but not always. A recent article in the *Indianapolis Star* ran the headline “Law to Segregate Omaha Schools Divides Nebraska.” It went on to explain:

The 170-page bill . . . required districts to work together to promote voluntary integration. But the legislation changed radically with a two page amendment by Chambers that carved the Omaha schools into racially identifiable districts, a move that he told his colleagues would allow black educators to control schools in black neighborhoods.²³

Unfortunately, this type of “volunteer segregation” is widespread, particularly in the Church. Though we share a common faith, the shade of our skin and the contours of our face still lead us to division and disunity.

23. Sam Dillon, “Law to Segregate Omaha Schools Divides Nebraska,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 15, 2006.

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

The virus of religious racism needs a strong antibiotic immediately. Should extreme groups like the KKK be completely eradicated, the Church would still be plagued with the disease of racism. Groups like the Kingdom Identity do not represent mainstream fundamental/evangelical thinking (although there is a resurgence movement among them).²⁴

There still persists an “us versus them” mentality and the vast majority of churches are still segregated. Much of the fundamental/evangelical church still struggles with trusting relationships. Despite the proper biblical teaching of humanity’s unity in the first Adam and Christians’ unity in the Last Adam, we still see too few authentic relationships cross ethnic lines. Furthermore, materials addressing interracial relationships, including marriage, are scarce! Much of our diversity agenda can be condensed to “How I can get my share of the American dream and some for my people.” Such an attitude is somewhat understandable as long as there remain grave and obvious disparities along cultural and ethnic lines.

Rather than beginning with the truths and commands of Scripture (which are clear and pointed in regard to our relationships with our fellow human beings), the Church has been sucked into the depravity of worldly thinking when it comes to our relationships with those who look different than us. Until we are willing to embrace the Word of God as truth, beginning from Genesis chapter 1, we will be continually drawn into the philosophies and hatred of the world system.

24. A & E Home Video, *The New Skinheads*, Broadcast News Networks, Inc. and A & E Television Networks, 1995.

The challenge facing today's Church is to inject the healing serum of truth into the body of Christ. This involves not only the proper *interpretation* of Scripture (many have already crossed that bridge) but *living* out the scriptural revelation of a diverse body united in Christ. The deep wounds of racial conflict that still persist can only be healed by the application of biblical principles regarding grace, love, peace, and forgiveness.

HOPE

Race relations are like a perpetual wound that some argue is worsening rather than healing. Indeed, eradication of the disease has proven to be an elusive dream. Racism in the United States has moved from a deadly epidemic to a serious, but stable, disease. Compared to recent ethnic wars, genocide, and ethnic cleansing throughout the world, the United States is better off than many countries in addressing diversity. Yes, there are some positives we must acknowledge:

- First, the United States is a very diverse country with a good degree of harmony, given this fact.
- Second, there has been a public acknowledgement of our past injustices, even if a mutually agreed upon resolution has not been reached.
- Third, many have experienced personal wrong but have avoided bitterness and become agents of reconciliation.
- Fourth, many fundamental/evangelicals have corrected past racist interpretations of biblical texts.
- Fifth, many "white" fundamental/evangelicals sincerely desire biblical reconciliation within the Church.

- Sixth, reconciliation is becoming more of a mainstream issue for various denominations and fellowships.
- And seventh, race relations in America have progressed from race-based slavery, exploitation, and segregation to greater social interaction (including so-called “inter-racial” marriage).

A growing number of Christians are being inspired by a biblical dream of our oneness through the blood of Jesus Christ. I define racial reconciliation in the Church as: *groups of different cultural, ethnic, economic, etc. backgrounds bonded together by redemption in Christ and growing together according to biblical principles for mutual edification, evangelism, and the glory of God* (John 13:34–35; Rom. 15:1–13; Gal. 2:1–14; 3:26–29; Eph. 2:11–22). This is not only a good solution to the problem of racism; it is the *only* lasting solution.

Many are pregnant with vision for multicultural churches and ministries. Crossroads Bible College started Crossroads Bible Church in 2001 as an extension of our mission statement: *Training Christian Leaders to Reach a Multiethnic Urban World for Christ*. We believe that God has a desire for churches that represent the biblical diversity of heaven. Crossroads Bible Church is living out the college mission with ethnic, economic, educational, and generational diversity within a biblical moral foundation.

Other organizations are doing similar things. The international Christian men’s movement, Promise Keepers, states, “A promise keeper is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.” Ken Hutcherson and the Antioch Global Network are committed to planting multiethnic churches. Numerous

denominations and fellowships are seeking to address the racial divide. Out of our history, great hope is emerging.

But let there be no doubt, widespread change and reconciliation begins with the heart — a single heart — *your* heart. Societal progress will come as individuals from both sides cross the bridge in a new unity with a new understanding of God's intent. One such individual is Tim Street, who allowed the truth of God's Word and the power of His Spirit to lead him across the bridge in spite of deep personal tragedy.

At fifteen years old I witnessed the murder of my father in a robbery by three men . . . men of a different color than me. Dad was a chaplain in the Army and had raised me to believe in the power of God to change lives and redeem them. There were many rough times over the next twenty years, but looking back, the hand of God was clearly at work, even when I wasn't paying attention to Him. Eventually God led me into the ministry and to a work focused on Reconciliation. While I could talk about it, I didn't really know what that meant until God asked me to take a step of faith and obedience that put me way outside my comfort zone.

Twenty years after my father's death, I stood at the gates of a maximum-security prison. On the other side of those gates was the man who drove the car the night my father was killed. I had written to all three men involved, but Don was the only one that responded and accepted my offer of a visit. As one set of gates closed behind me and another set in front began to open, I looked down at my shoes. My mind was flooded with Scripture and the

Lord said to me that I was following in His footsteps for the first time. Through the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit in the years since, Don is now out of prison, married, and working to help other ex-offenders transition successfully back into society.

I know that the Lord calls us to “Go” and to go where we may not want to. But He blesses us in our obedience and in so doing brings glory and honor to His name.²⁵

Where is *your* heart in regard to racism, Darwinism, and making a change in this world? Change is coming, but only you can do *your* part, only you can build bridges of unity, understanding, and respect with those around you. Just like the marchers experienced in 1965, you might face serious obstacles and opposition. But in the chapters ahead, Ken and I will give life-changing information and ideas that, if you are willing, will lead you to take definitive action. We will investigate some of the Scriptures that clearly paint a world view radically different than the secular/Darwinist view that has fueled so much racism in the past. We will show you how this biblical world view is strongly supported by the best and most up-to-date scientific facts.

We have much to learn from our history, but our history is in the past. The time to look forward is now. Each of us must act within the sphere God has given us and not wait for *someone else* to change the system. And whether in personal actions or systemic change, we must look to the cross of Christ to bridge the racial gap.

25. Tim Street, unpublished personal testimony, Indianapolis, Indiana, November 2006.

For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity . . . so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace (Eph. 2:14–16).