

S K I N
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A G O S P E L A P P R O A C H
T O R A C E & R A C I A L
A N I M O S I T Y

D O U G L A S W I L S O N

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CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS RACISM, AND WHY IS IT SINFUL?

In our modern climate, the more undefined and nebulous a “vile” thing like “racism” is, the better it is for the race-mongers and race-baiters. With lack of definition, they can *always* nail you. Federal bureaucracy got rolling a little slowly after Katrina? Racism. Got your feelings hurt at airport security? Racism. Mark Twain wrote a book a hundred and fifty years ago that had racial epithets in it? Racism. And so on. Of course, racism inflation sets in, and pretty soon the coin is completely debased. When everyone is racist, then nobody is.

Back when the world was more oriented in a right-side-up way than it is now, *racism* was a shorthand way of describing the mental outlook of the bigot—and everybody knew what a bigot was, also. *Racism* was a descriptive term, and I did not mind describing racism as a sin against God, which I have done for many decades now. And if we


are using normal, old-school definitions, racism really is a sin against God.

But we have gotten to the point where the word is not only useless, but is also pernicious. It has now come to be applied willy-nilly to virtually everything in the Western world, from microaggressions to expressing the view at Tea Party rallies that budgets should balance. Racism is, as a wit once explained, winning an argument with a liberal. It has become pernicious because if racism is a sin, then prejudice is, also, and if prejudice is a sin, then discrimination is, also. And the racism and the prejudice and the discrimination float over the perpetrator's head like an inchoate cloud of undefined but still untoward thoughts. And this is how we have gotten to the point where a person is thought to be messed up if he discriminates about anything. So I would be quite happy in principle to throw the word overboard as being now worthless, and refuse to use it anymore. But when we had done so, we would immediately need *another* word to describe those folks who really are . . . racist. And so, in the meantime, we need a working definition.

I hope it is clear that the word *racist* should not be routinely or automatically applied to the following: someone to my political right, someone who thinks that anyone named Muhammad should receive extra scrutiny at airports, a medical researcher who believes that one race may be vulnerable to a disease that the others are not, and so on. There are many positions that are related to race that may even in fact be wrong, and yet should not be labeled racist. Nor should we label someone as a racist simply for believing that the races are different. Of course

CHAPTER 2

**THE ONLY COLOR
THAT MATTERS**

 Outside of Jesus Christ, racial harmony is a pipe dream. Apart from Christ, racial reconciliation is not going to happen, but rather the opposite. In Christ, racial harmony is a theological necessity, a doctrinal requirement, and an eschatological hope.

Not only is the secular dream of “one humanity” far beyond the secularists’ grasp, it is also beyond the grasp of weak sister evangelicals who for some mysterious reason have adopted the secularist vision of racial harmony instead of the Christian one. This, despite the fact that the impotence of the secularist form of it grows more apparent by the minute, and despite the fact that the Scriptures are so plain on the basis for our reconciliation in Christ.

White and black cannot get along because their blood is red in common, but they *can* get along because Christ’s blood was red and uncommon, and was shed for the

express purpose of making one new man out of the two, and, in addition, of making one new man out of the seventy. God is building a new humanity in Christ, and there is no new humanity outside of Him.

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (Rev. 5:9)

Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. (Col. 3:11)

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:28)

We serve and worship a cosmopolitan Christ, and there is no cosmopolis apart from Him.

But in order to come to Him, we must repent and believe. Repent of what? We must repent of the sinful things we were doing. Whites must repent of white sins, and blacks must repent of black sins. You can repent the other guy's problems all day long, and at the end of the day there is no forgiveness for *you*.

I am writing as a minister of Christ, so on one level my color is irrelevant. My commission to speak was not color coded. But it also happens that I am a white man, so let us begin with white sins.

CHAPTER 3

THE HARD BIGOTRY OF LOW EXPECTATIONS

In the last chapter, I used the phrase “soft bigotry of low expectations,” which was coined by George W. Bush (or his speechwriter) and is laden with worldview wisdom. When someone is growing up in a world in which he is confronted with all sorts of unfair challenges, there is a natural and sentimental reaction that wants to soften the challenges instead of hardening the challenger.

The end result is that we wind up placing yet *another* challenge in front of the poor kid. We lower the standard in order to make it easier for him, which actually just puts an asterisk next to all his future accomplishments, if there are any. The asterisk says, “This accomplishment may or may not be the result of this individual’s talent or industry.”

TWO STORIES

Allow me to begin with the juxtaposition of two incidents.

Quite a few years ago, in the early days of Logos School, I was teaching a class. I remember that it was upper elementary or junior high, somewhere in that neighborhood. I also remember that there was a young black student in the class, and he was not really a great student and was something of a pill. And I recall a parent-teacher conference I had one time with his mom, in which she appeared insufficiently aware of how much of a pill he was being. He was not popular with the other kids, and she, naturally enough, attributed this to their problems with his race. We also discussed his school work. But rather than argue with his mother about whether or not he was being a pill regarding the other kids and a slacker regarding his work, I took a different tack.

I granted her point that he was growing up in a bigoted world, one in which he would have to work twice as hard as the privileged kids in order to achieve the same results. I granted her that, but then said that, as his teacher, I needed to inform her that he was currently working *half* as hard. Given the nature of the world he was growing up in, what do you think is going to happen to him? That's one story.

Then comes Kate Brown, governor of the People's Republic of Oregonistan, who in 2021 signed a measure that removed reading, writing, and math requirements for graduation from Oregon schools, and she did this foul deed in order to *help* students of color.

You see, in the world of unbearable whiteness that Kate Brown inhabits, teaching black kids to do math is a bridge too far. For normal people, hearing this, what word comes to mind? *Insufferable*. *Patronizing*. *Exasperating*.

CHAPTER 4

THIS CRIMSON CARNAGE

This essay, which expands on some of the issues raised in the last chapter, was originally published on June 23, 2015, a week after nine people were killed and three injured in a shooting at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina. All dates and data are from the original.

I begin by saying that I think of the American flag with affection, respect, and sorrow. I think of what it *used* to represent, what it *ought* to represent, and what it periodically still represents. The sorrow has to do with what our ruling elites are insisting that it must *come* to represent, and the grief is over their many successes in that endeavor. Despite this, I do not yet believe the American flag is a lost cause. Take that as the starting point.

But if our rule in these matters must be the logic of those demanding that any and all vestiges of the Confederacy

come down, we will soon enough discover that this is a knife that can cut in all kinds of directions. In all of this, the issue is not so much what you do as *why* you are doing it. If you admit a false principle into the settlement of public disputes like this one—and I hate to be the one to bring you the sorrowful tidings—the *false principle does not disappear when the dispute does*. It remains there, propped up in the corner, cocked and loaded, waiting for the next dispute. And because of the times we live in, there *will* be a next dispute, probably in about three weeks. Glad to see she was among those who could make it.

None of this has anything whatever to do with a desire for a do-over at Gettysburg. I am carrying no water for a neo-Confederate anything. If you think I am, then that simply means that you are not grasping a point that is dangerous to miss. I am not fighting yesterday's battles. I am fighting today's battles and some of tomorrow's. If you want me to believe that the Confederate flag in South Carolina should come down because of sins *x*, *y*, and *z*, then I am simply inquiring why another flag should not come down because of far more heinous sins *X*, *Y*, and *Z*. Don't accuse me of racist sins I have despised all my life, and then call me stupid. Answer the question. I've got all day.

And it won't do to say that the American flag is the flag of an extant power, an actual country, because that just means that application of this grand principle might take some actual courage. If you refrain because fighting adversaries who are armed and dangerous is . . . well, dangerous, then you are exactly the kind of person who would have played it safe in 1850. People kept their heads down then too.

CHAPTER 5

**PRETTY SURE
IT IS NOT YOU**

Flannery O'Connor wrote that everything that rises must converge, but this must also be said of everything that is circling the drain. The shared worldview of our chattering classes appears to me to be nothing more than a vast epistemic sinkhole. This is the kind of thing that could make Turretin, were he present with us, exclaim something like *zut alors!* which, when translated, means something like *holy smokes*. You know, a little inside term of art from one of the great scholars of the Reformation.

In order to be cast as a radical or a crazy these days, all you need do is say something like "A man should be judged by the content of his character, and not by the color of his skin." Total wingnuttery. If you insist on equal weights and measures, no thumb on the scale, whether that thumb be black like Al Sharpton's or white like David Duke's, or Daisy Duke's, for that matter, if you maintain something

along the lines of “all thumbs matter,” as in, keep *any* kind of thumb off the scale, you will be written off as a crackpot or, as the professionals would call it, a psychoceramic.

I mean, how dare you say that we should cultivate an official cultural color blindness? I know that it is ostensibly the stated goal and everything, but if anyone hazards to suggest that we actually give it a try, they will be grabbed where the pants hang loose and frog-marched to the curb.

I say all this because I wroted something that hit a nerve, and I was kind of surprised by the nerve it hit. I know, I shouldn't be surprised by anything anymore, but I kind of was.

Following the August 2015 shooting of Alison Parker and Adam Ward, I tweeted, “So a black guy shot some white people to start a race war. What flag do we have to take down that will fix it this time?”

What was that about? You should recall that after the Charleston shootings a few months earlier, after what seemed like minutes, a hue and holler went up about how we needed to take down the Confederate flag from its place on the grounds of the South Carolina capital. A full-court press was called, and there we were. Dylann Roof, who shot the people in that church, was a white punk who wanted to start a race war. It wasn't long before pictures of him brandishing the Confederate flag appeared online, and see? See?

No, I don't see. The problem is not race. The problem is *godlessness*. The problem is not that our society is racially divided. The problem is that we are divided from *God*, estranged from Him.

CHAPTER 6

SKINISM

One collection of folks who excel at both racial vainglory and racial animosity is a group that call themselves *kinists*. I call them *skinists*.

I take it as a given that any conservative Christian who addresses cultural issues at all is not worth his salt if he does not get himself accused of racism. I am convinced that unless we are drawing that charge somehow, some way, then we are not doing our part to threaten the prevailing multicultural hooey. It is therefore important to incur the charge of racism. It is equally important that the charge be a slander and a falsehood.

Sometimes the liars on the left start to believe their own propaganda and cannot fathom why I would be in a conflict or dispute with any kind with racist. The answer is very simple really. Their leftist propaganda is false, and racism is not a sin against the state, or the people, or the prevailing leftist sensibilities. Racial malice and racial

vainglory are sins against God, not because they take the obvious factors of race into account as they interpret the world, but because they are malicious and vainglorious.

Cultures can be sinful or righteous, good or evil, orderly or chaotic, advanced or primitive, rich or poor. But all of them are a product of a people's *cultus*—they are a function of the god or God they worship, and not a function of the God who made them. The thing that requires me to identify kinists as racist (and as much in defiance of the Scriptures as any they oppose) is the overt malevolence they routinely show toward the image and work of God Himself. To mock folly and sin is a prophetic duty. To mock the color of a man's skin is to defy the handiwork of God. Crimes motivated by racial animosity (in any direction) reveal a pathetic culture, the end result of worshipping pathetic gods. They were not the end result of the triune God's decision to make some of us white and some of us black. When whites worship pathetic gods, the end result features the same kind of twistedness. The issue for us as Christians is always worship. And how can these people say they love God, whom they have not seen, when they routinely taunt the handiwork of God in others, handiwork they have seen, thereby showing that they detest the image of God? Of course they might say they only mean to insult certain sins—they might say that in response, but it is not what they actually do. Spend fifteen minutes on a skinist website or Facebook group, and you will find plenty of examples of hostility to the creational work of God. If I were admonishing a man for laziness, and I suddenly found myself upbraiding him for having two legs, I have crossed over from legitimate admonition

CHAPTER 7

PRIDE AND WHITE PRIVILEGE

One of the good things about controversy is that it makes you answer questions you wouldn't otherwise address, and it sometimes makes you answer uncomfortable ones. One question that has come up in response to my writing about racial justice has to do with the issue of "white privilege." How much do whites just take for granted, not knowing how different the same world looks to those who do not share in those privileges? That got me to thinking—and Wodehouse once said that certain minds are like the soup in a bad restaurant, better left unstirred—but here are the results of my musings anyhow.

It is easy for modern Christians to assume that privilege, while not exactly a sin, is closely related. Bigotry, prejudice, animosity, and malice would be the sins proper—spiritual diabetes—and basking thoughtlessly in your privileged status would be like being prediabetic. You aren't being bad *yet*, but you are in the danger zone. There is something to this, but the problem is that the spiritual precautions we take are usually in the wrong direction

entirely—treating our prediabetes with Snickers bars. We tend to fortify ourselves with guilt over that privilege when we ought to be overflowing with gratitude. But this does require explanation.

There are many forms of privilege—wealth, education, birth order, race, looks, age, experience, intelligence, nationality, and so on. Not only that, but you can then start combining them—wealthy *and* intelligent *and* good-looking and so on. Some privileges are detachable, and others are dyed in the wool. The sins that afflict the privileged are many, but the central one would be pride, a sleek arrogance that feels that they somehow earned or merited the blessings that surround them. Born on third, as the saying goes, and they think they hit a triple. The sins that accompany the unprivileged are also many, but the central one would be resentful envy. This is the gnawing sensation in the gut, like a rat was living down there, that feels like it was *robbed*. Born on first, and they think they hit a triple.

But the Bible teaches us that every form of wealth and privilege we have should always call forth *gratitude*. If we have sin to confess in this regard, it should be the sin of pride, not the sin of privilege itself. There is no sin of privilege. If someone is insisting that I must repent of racial privilege, repent of the doors that are open to me because of the whiteness “that is invisible to me,” I deny it. The *Bible* defines sin, not the envious race theories of others. But not only must I not be proud of whatever privileges I have, so also others must not envy them. And because there is always someone who has way more privileges than I do, I can check my heart by seeing if I am as glad for the privileges of those above me, as I am for my own.

CHAPTER 8

**FERGUSON, FREDDIE,
AND PHILANDO**

The deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and other black men in encounters with police officers have churned up a steady stream of outrage in recent years.

SKIN AND BLOOD

As the 2014 events in Ferguson, Missouri, demonstrated, lawlessness dislocates everything in the system, up and down the entire line.

People are complicated, especially when they are in sin, and situations are complex. So when people make up their minds about a particular allegation based entirely on the color of the participants, they are establishing nothing other than their own disqualification for having anything whatever to do with the justice system, or anything whatever to say about the future of race relations in America.

There are more than enough confirmed instances of police misbehavior to have made it quite possible the Wilson/Brown incident could have been one of them. They are more than enough confirmed incidents of inner-city black thuggery to have made that a possibility, as well. To be trapped in the kind of emotional blinders so that they can only accuse in one direction, and only defend in the other, is to be trapped in sin.

But the mob is omnivorous, ravenous, and blind. Rage doesn't make sense—if it did, it wouldn't be rage. And when frustration explodes, it never erupts in rational ways. The mob at Ephesus had no idea what they were doing there or what the point actually was (Acts 19:32), but they were more than willing to yell enthusiastically for a couple of hours about it.

The one thing a sane society may not do is cater to the insanity, trying to split the difference. In this regard, the behavior of the authorities in Missouri has been idiotic, and the actions of the Justice Department have been despicable. This is not because Wilson could not possibly have been guilty—it is because anybody who expects due process to run smoothly with a mob outside burning the place down is someone who specializes in grand inversions.

The mob is more than willing to ignore the camels and riot over the gnats. You want to show your displeasure over a white cop abusing (and killing) a black man, and you want to do this by abusing hundreds of black men and women? Suit yourself, but I don't particularly care for your theories of social justice. Don't tell us that "black lives matter" while showing your utter contempt for black lives. Anyone who turns matters of justice over to a mob of any

CHAPTER 9

**DIRTY COPS AND
DUE PROCESS**

Everyone knows that dirty cops exist. We all know that somewhere, somehow, some cops are on the take, some are morally incompetent, some are on a power trip, some disable their bodycams before taking care of business, and so on. Anyone who believes that dirty cops *can't* exist is someone who is unaware of the biblical doctrine of sin, is bereft of common sense, and is woefully lacking in his knowledge of the corpus of the American film industry.

So when an incident happens somewhere, one involving a cop and a black teenager, and all hell breaks loose, how are we supposed to think about it biblically? What are we to think of it while the rioting is in process? Since we know *a priori* that official malfeasance is a possibility, and even more likely in some corrupt jurisdictions, does this move everything to that famous “level playing field”? *No*.

Before there is an investigation, we don't know all the facts. Neither side knows all the facts. Those rioting don't know the facts, and those not rioting don't know the facts. Does this put both sides on an equal footing, then? *No*.

In the world of biblical justice, a mastery of the facts is necessary *in order to condemn*. The principle is stated over and over again in Scripture—"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death" (Deut. 17:6). You may not condemn a man unless his crime has been independently confirmed. Without such independent confirmation, you may not condemn a man for violating his responsibilities as a citizen, and you may not condemn an officer for an abuse of his powers. In the name of Christ, *you may not*.

The cops don't get to do it to us, and we don't get to do it to the cops.

It is biblically nonsensical to say that you need two or three witnesses in order to *not* condemn a man. To put it that way would amount to saying that a man is guilty unless he comes up with two or three witnesses who prove him not to be. That is, guilty unless proven innocent.

So prior to an investigation and trial, *nobody* has all the facts. But that still doesn't put everyone in the same position.

I don't need all the facts in order to *not* execute an accused officer. I need all the facts to condemn him. I don't need all the facts before I decline to burn down the shop of a Vietnamese immigrant. I don't need all the facts before I *don't* throw a brick through a window. I don't need all the facts before refusing to tip over a car to set it on fire.