

IS THERE A BETTER WAY?

Moving Beyond Racism in the Church

[Article Excerpted from Author's *Must We Be Silent?*]

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Of all the Christian churches today, Seventh-day Adventists are the best equipped to deal with the challenge of racism. If we believe, as Ellen White did, that one day—in our day—the walls of racial 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” (*Christian Service*, 217), then Bible-believing Adventists who are eagerly awaiting the Lord’s return have a unique opportunity to address racism in both society and the church. Three reasons can be given for this assertion.

Our Unique Identity. First, the Seventh-day Adventist church’s self-understanding as *the remnant Church*—the true Israel of God—recognizes the fact that membership in the New Israel does not depend on natural birth but on the spiritual birth of conversion (Jn 3:3-21); not on ethnic blood but on the redeeming blood of Christ (Heb 9:14, 15; Rev 5:9). 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 segregation or apartheid (an Afrikaans word that means separation) acceptable in the biblical religion is separation from sin. The Bible requires us to display the beauty of racial harmony.

Our Unique Mission. Second, the Seventh-day Adventist church understands its reason for existence to be found in its unique *global mission* in the world. Members of this church 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). This mission demands that we transcend all the barriers of race that currently exist in our midst.

Our Unique Name. Third, the *unique name* by which the church is identified—Seventh-day Adventist—calls for an unparalleled display of racial harmony. The “Seventh-day” component of the name announces our theology of the Sabbath, a doctrine pointing to God as the Creator (and hence, re-Creator or Redeemer) and Father of all human races. The Sabbath is designed to remind believers, at least every week, of the inherent worth of every person and the need to treat each one—irrespective of gender, ethnic origin, religion or class—with respect and dignity (Exod 20:8-11). [1] 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” [2]

The “Adventist” component of the name recognizes that in the church awaiting Christ’s return and in the earth made new will be people from “every nation, tribe, people, and language.” That such a community should actually exist in a world torn by ethnic and racial divisions and hatred

will be a wonder and a marvel to the world. The church could be “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.” [3]

The above three defining 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 existed since the early church. Describing how the early church conceived itself in the world, one second century writer noted:

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. . . . [4]

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.” [5] If the racial problem is not to “ever remain a most perplexing problem” for the Adventist Church, [6] then the time is ripe for the church to seek biblical insights to address the problem of racism in the church.[7]

We must speak candidly to this forbidden subject. The suggestions that follow will be drawn from Acts 10, the Jew and Gentile encounter of Peter and Cornelius.

1. 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 society and that it takes no toll on our spiritual life.” [8]

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 harbored 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 pillars of the Christian faith, racial and ethnic prejudice thrived.

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. 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.

One rather surprising thing about the apostle's declaration 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, yet he did not fully understand that it had some practical, ethical implications for his own life.

The truth of God being no respecter of persons, and His insistence that His followers be impartial, are recorded in several places in the Old Testament 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. Sadly, Peter and the others did not “perceive” that racism or ethnic prejudice is not acceptable to God.

Apparently, the disciples 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.

We can be thankful that God gave clear instruction on this matter to Peter, instruction preserved in His Word.

Could the Scriptures be suggesting that even Bible-believing Seventh-day Adventists—God-fearing church members, well-meaning missionaries, successful evangelists, capable church administrators, articulate professors of religion or theology, prolific writers and editors, etc.—can exhibit racial or ethnic prejudice, without fully realizing it?

2. Confess the Sins of Racism.

Peter's statement, “Of truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons . . .” may also be understood as a public act of confession. He may have understood that injustice cannot be easily forgotten, but it can be freely forgiven upon confession. Therefore, if we desire racial harmony, we must confess our sins for whatever part we may have played, deliberately or unknowingly, in perpetuating 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;
 - for shirking our responsibility to show concern for the poor, weak and oppressed, instead of blaming them for the racial injustices they suffer;
 - for the racial slurs, epithets and jokes, and the innocent caricatures and stereotypes we have used for other races *when we were behind closed doors*;
 - for our 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 covert 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 ideologies of certain political systems or parties; [9]
- for placing prejudicial stumbling blocks in the path of our children, and letting them mimic our racial attitudes and actions.

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

We also must confess our sins: [10]

- for mirroring the prejudice we ourselves have experienced and retaliating with prejudice, bitterness and anger;
- for being suspicious of the intentions behind all genuine gestures of goodwill from persons belonging to the favored race and for rebuffing them as hypocritical;
- for accusing and blaming the children of the favored race for the wrongs committed by their parents;
- for the times when we, like Uncle Toms, have hypocritically eulogized the perpetrators of racism;
- for the occasions when, for personal gain, power, or 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 the

results of our lack of responsibility upon other races.

· for our failure to empathize with victims of reverse discrimination, and for gloating in our hearts when we say to them, “Now you know how we have always felt.”

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

3. Seek Biblical Solutions.

In the home of Cornelius, Peter called attention to what “God hath shewed me” about other races (Acts 10:28); similarly, all the Gentiles present sought to “hear all things that are commanded . . . of God” (v. 33). In other words, they asked for divine guidance. This means that since the inspired Scriptures express the mind and will of God (2 Tim 3:16-17), we must always seek *biblical* solutions to the problems that confront us. Three points have special bearing on our discussion of racial or tribal conflicts:

First, we must clearly understand that the root cause of racism is not merely economic or political exploitation, but *human pride*. If the problem of racism is a heart problem, then, the cure for it is not “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.” There is a 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” (*Steps to Christ*, 18).

Henry Ward Beecher put 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.” [11]

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). [12]

Third, we must not confuse the Christian's pursuit of unity among the various races, with the secular agitation for *equality*[13]—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). The Bible calls upon believers to pursue unity at all times (Jn 17:20-23), but as for equality, we must distinguish clearly between ontological equality

and functional equality.

Ontological equality suggests that human beings *are* equal--in their standing before God, in all having been created in His image, in all needing salvation through Christ, in all having been called to the same destiny (Gen 1:26, 27; Gal 3:28; 1 Pet 3:7). The Christian recognizes that this equality results solely from God's action and purposes and not from any intrinsic qualities that human beings possess by themselves. It is a gift of God to every member of the human race, regardless of ethnicity, status or gender. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote in Galatians 3:28 that "in Christ Jesus" there is "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave or free, neither male nor female."

But as we showed in our discussion of the Galatians 3:28 text in chapter 10 ("The Feminist Campaign for Full Equality"), the Bible's teaching on ontological equality does not do away with functional role distinctions. Thus, ontological equality must not be confused with functional equality, the view that there is equality of ability, skill, gifts, office, or position. The Bible does *not* teach functional equality, since the Holy Spirit gives to each "severally as He wills" (see 1 Cor 12; Rom 12:3-8).

The *unity* to which Christians are called affirms ontological equality, not functional equality. Such unity seeks to employ our functional differences in a complementary manner for the advancement of God's kingdom. This understanding will correct some of the excesses of the various racial or gender equal rights movements.

4. Develop Interracial Relationships.

Since racism is kept alive by ignorance of 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 as we make the effort to move beyond our segregated homes, neighborhoods, schools, churches, conferences, etc., and relate meaningfully with people of other races. Such an attitude does not renounce the natural affinity we feel for those with similar culture, but it endeavors to expand our horizons through our coming to know, understand, and appreciate people of different backgrounds.

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 social customs and traditions (Acts 10:28), Peter risked his life, career, and position in order to establish a *relationship* between himself, a representative of God from the favored race, and Cornelius, a member of the despised race. Whether the underlying division was ethnic or religious is immaterial; the gulf was wide, but God bridged it decisively. Peter allowed the messengers from Cornelius "to be his guests" (Acts 10:23 NIV), and Cornelius, apparently, permitted Peter and his fellow Jews to stay with him "for a few days" (Acts 10:48; cf. 11:3).

As a result of the encounter, Peter rejected the two extreme views people tend to adopt

towards one another: 1) treating the superior race as divine and hence, “falling down at his feet and worshipping him” (see vv. 25-26), and 2) treating the inferior race as subhuman, as “common or unclean” (v. 28). “Peter refused both to be treated by Cornelius as if he were a *god*, and to treat Cornelius as if he were a *dog* .” [14]

Can we imagine what would happen if the different races in our church, in every part of the world, would interact with one another, visiting, praying, and sharing their homes, meals, and resources? When we truly get to know people of other races as real human beings, we shall:

- begin to identify our next door neighbors as Sue and John and not as “my white neighbors”; we shall recognize the physician as Dr. Kofi, not as a “fine black doctor”;
- not only allow them to speak, but make efforts to hear them in our church publications and at our church council meetings; [15]
- put an end to the cultural snobbery that leads us to think and act as if we exhibit a far greater sense of ethical sensitivity—on issues of justice, fairness, equality, etc.—than do other races in the church;
- hire them in our churches and institutions, not in order to fulfill some racial quotas, but because they are the best qualified and most gifted personnel available;
- work toward developing models that show the spiritual and social significance of cohesive worship and ministry, and a missionary enterprise that allows workers to move “from everywhere to everywhere”;
- celebrate their histories not as monuments to tokenism, but because their experiences have kinship with our own;
- carefully evaluate our attitude toward them if, despite our strong and wise counsel to the contrary, they enter into interracial or intertribal marriages with those of our race; for then, it will be easier for us to accept the members of the other race not only as our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also as our brothers and sisters-*in-law*. [16]

5. Take a Stand Against Racial 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 own tribe, race, or group. It compels us to be ethically sensitive to social issues affecting all human beings (war, abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, gender and age discrimination, 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 New Testament suggests that those in privileged positions and who benefited from their favored status—i.e., those who were slow to recognize that “God is no respecter of

persons”—were foremost in speaking out in God’s name against partiality, whether based on ethnic origin, religious background, or other distinctions. For example, Peter (1 Pet 1:17), Paul (Rom 2:11; Gal 2:6), and James (2:1) all proclaimed this doctrine without fear. 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).

This may explain Ellen White’s rhetorical question: “Is there not much due to them [the 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?” [17] 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, in whatever way possible, some members of the underprivileged race in the harness of their talents and gift as missionaries, administrators, theologians, etc.; [18]
- when there are opportunities for employment or advancement, etc., we shall not ignore or overlook some races;
- we shall not judge the intelligence, capability, or spiritual maturity of other races by how articulate they are in their use of particular languages;
- 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 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 world-wide church such as our own, no region of the world field will be encouraged to blackmail, defy, or circumvent the consensus of the church on theological issues;
- we shall quit masquerading our contempt for some races by acting as if the church in some parts of the world is more progressive or principled, enlightened or mature than the rest of the church;
- we shall emulate the example of Adventists in post-apartheid South Africa in overcoming the scandal of racially segregated conferences that currently exist in North America;
- whenever the church is called upon to compute its success, we will insist that the computation should not be in terms of numbers, dollars, or degrees, but in terms of faithfulness to historic Christian truths and in terms of costly discipleship. [19]

From the encounter of Peter and Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10), we may conclude that whenever we make genuine efforts at racial harmony, there will not only be an outpouring of the

Holy Spirit, but there will also be conversions and baptisms (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-18). Are we eager for the same?

Conclusion

Human history records the tragic consequences of the disgrace of race. Racism 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, have often 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 skin, eyes, or hair, or some other external feature—including age, weight, gender, or disability.

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 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. [20]

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 founded^[21]—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.

Racism has disgraced the grace of race. It has left our world wounded, bleeding, and dying. Part of our mission in proclaiming the everlasting gospel to “every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” is to demonstrate visibly the triumph of grace over race. This triumph does not eliminate the differences among groups of people but transcends them through respect, acceptance, and Christlike love. Through the Savior's enabling power, we can show the world that, indeed, the remnant church is a beautiful model of what humanity's final state will be in God's design. Our strongest motivation to display the beauty of the grace of race is found in the

teaching and personal example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“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?” [22]

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.” [23]

Indeed, Seventh-day Adventists maintain that:

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope, and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children (*Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists*, #13).

Can we imagine the powerful impact our Christianity will have, if we live out the ethical implications of this belief?

With prophetic insight, Ellen White looked beyond her day to ours and proclaimed, “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” (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9:209).

She was most emphatic: “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” (The Southern Work, 43, emphasis mine).

Shall we respond to this ethical challenge of the three angels’ messages? Are we eager for the Holy Spirit to knock down our walls of tribal and racial prejudices? Are we willing to allow God’s impartial love to triumph over our pride, our hurt, and our hate? Are we prepared to let His amazing grace triumph over the disgrace of our mazing race? “For Christ’s sake, let us do something now”!

Endnotes

- [1] Refer to my “Remember’ the Sabbath Day,” *Adventists Affirm* 8/3 (Year-End 1994), 5-14.
- [2] *Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . .* , 73-74.
- [3] C. H. Dodd, *Christ and the New Humanity*, Facet Books Social Ethics Series 6 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1965), p. 2.
- [4] *Epistle to Diognetus*, 5-6, quoted by C. H. Dodd, *Christ and the New Humanity*, Facet Books Social Ethics Series 6 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1965), 3-4.
- [5] Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 403.
- [6] Cf., Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9:214.
- [7] 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 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), 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).
- [8] David A. Rausch, *Legacy of Hatred*, 1.
- [9] Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez suggest that American Seventh-day Adventism tends to identify with the Republican Party. See 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), 149-211.
- [10] George Kelsey, “Racial Patterns and the Churches,” 74-76.
- [11] 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.
- [12] Spencer Perkins, “Integration Versus Reconciliation,” *Christianity Today*, October 4, 1993, 23.
- [13] 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 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.

[14] John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1990), 189 (emphasis mine).

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

[16] Adventists contemplating interracial marriage need to be cautioned by Ellen White's judicious "Counsel Regarding Intermarriage" (*Selected Messages*, 2:343-344), which points out some of the problems and pressures experienced by couples and children of interracial marriages. These factors add to the stresses commonly experienced in marriage. In most parts of the world, such factors make interracial marriages inadvisable at best and impossible to recommend. My concern here, however, probes the racial attitude that frowns on interracial/intertribal marriage or adoption for the

wrong reasons, such as assuming that (1) some races are inherently inferior, or (2) intermarriage results in "blood mixing" or "mongrelization," or that (3) it is a case of spiritual "unequal yoking together." Such assumptions lead to the faulty conclusion that it is wrong or sinful for converted, Bible-believing Adventists of different tribes or races to be married. Too often this conclusion results in their rejection and isolation. Is it possible that some of our opposition to interracial marriages has more to do with our own racial biases than with Ellen White's judicious counsel—a counsel that goes beyond the

color line to include any kind of incompatibility (be it of religion, age, social status, ethnicity, etc.) that is likely to adversely affect the couple and the children who are involved in the marriage relationship? This question calls for honest searching of heart.

[17] *Southern Work*, 11-12; "Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done them [colored race]" (ibid., 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., 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., 144).

[18] Ellen White urged: "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., 202).

[19] 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).

[20] 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.

[21] 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*, 25-26).

[22] David A. Rausch, *Legacy of Hatred*, 15.

[23] 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*, 54).