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Racism, Power, and the Church

Part of the great strength and beauty of humanity is the breadth of diversity that it contains. Humanity is expressed in countless colors, cultures, and creeds. These differences, seen all throughout the world, make humanity breathtaking. Chief among these beautiful expressions of diversity stands race: a sociological, yet stable construct that delineates distinctions between cultures. The various ethnicities in the human family add a powerful dynamic to our interactions; the beauty of racial and cultural uniqueness demonstrates one of God' oldest and greatest gifts to humanity. Unfortunately, the discrimination and mistreatment of others, leading to systemic racism, is an issue that is also as old as humanity itself.

As our globe continues to become smaller through technology, the reality of ethnic differences will become more apparent. In America alone, the present reality of prejudice, discrimination, and racism in this country has become vividly obvious over the past four years. As a result, people of different ethnicities must learn how to live and flourish together.

Throughout her history, the American Church has fought racism as well as regrettably contributed, even tacitly, to this country's racist ideologies. The church must look to the Scripture not only to learn about and to understand the issue but also to work toward the biblical hope of a world without racism. It will no longer suffice for Christians to be against prejudice and racism in word only. The church must meet the need of eradicating racism, actively combating and tearing down racism indeed, both outside and inside her four walls.

Congregations across America have not been active enough in civil rights issue for various reasons; this reticence to be involved may be attributed to the theory that (1) the church remains naïvely “colorblind” to a racist world, and (2) the church has been paralyzed to act due to being overwhelmed with the magnitude of the task ahead. Regardless of the reasons, the Body of Christ in the United States will do the world, whom she is called to love, a disservice, misrepresenting the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, by not responding proactively to the issue of systemic racism.

To grasp a Biblical view and solution to institutional racism, one should first define and distinguish these key lexical terms. This alone has been a problem in academia as Hoyt notes.¹ Hoyt brings up, “there is perhaps no term that provokes the level of confusion, consternation, and conflict that the tem ‘racism’ does.”² Looking at the history, he shows that the term *racism* “came into common usage in the 1930s when a new word was required to describe the theories on which the Nazis based their persecution of the Jews.”³ He then explains the original definition saying that at its onset racism was

The belief that all members of a purported race possess characteristics, abilities, or qualities specific to that race, especially so as to distinguish it as inferior or superior to another race or other races. Racism is a particular form of prejudice defined by preconceived erroneous beliefs about race and members of racial groups... [this definition of racism was an] evidence at the point that one subscribes to the notion of race itself, because belief in race is the fallacious prerequisite for the belief in differences

¹ For an in-depth look into the etymology and history of the word “racism” read Carlo Hoyt Jr.’s “The Pedagogy of the Meaning of Racism: Reconciling a Discordant Discourse.”

² Hoyt, Jr , Carlos. "The Pedagogy of the Meaning of Racism: Reconciling a Discordant Discourse." (225). *Social Work* 57.3 (n.d.): 225-34. Print

³ Hoyt, “The Pedagogy” (227).

between races.⁴

Princeton Theological Seminary's Raimundo César Barreto has defined racism as "any attitude that denies human flourishing to a person or a social group based on their ethnic origin."⁵ Because of definitions like this, some conclude that racism is close to dead. Seeing the danger of this thinking, many scholars over the last half-century have advocated for a revision of that definition to racism.

It is widely accepted in academia to understand racism in terms of the " $R=P+P$ formulation, meaning racism equals prejudice plus power."⁶ Dr. Caleb Rosado, from Portland's Warner Pacific College, brilliantly explains that "racism" deals with the interaction of power and prejudice, a form of prejudgment.⁷ Power and prejudice work together in racism. All people hold prejudicial attitudes, although only majority cultures may use their status to oppress minority populations because they possess the power to do so.

Prejudice by itself does not constitute racism, however. Neither does power by itself. But when people use their position of power, be it political or institutional, to reinforce their prejudices and to enforce them so that as a result of their racial prejudices the life chances, rights and opportunities of others are limited, the result is racism. Thus, the simplest definition of racism then is: Racism is prejudice plus power.⁸

⁴ Hoyt, "The Pedagogy" (225).

⁵ Barreto, Raimundo Cesar. "Racism." (103). *Journal of Latin American Theology* 11.1 (n.d.): 103-05. Print.

⁶ Hoyt, "The Pedagogy" (226).

⁷ Rosado. "The Undergirding Factor."

⁸ Rosado, Caleb. "The Undergirding Factor Is POWER Toward an Understanding of Prejudice and Racism." *Critical Multicultural Pavilion*. EdChange Paul C. Gorski. 1998.

Rosado recognizes racism fundamentally as “the social construction of power.”⁹ Now, there are those in the academy who find this definition to be incomplete and misleading, primarily because this definition can exempt those who are without power from the conversation about.¹⁰ Hoyt provides a workable solution by using the phrase *intuitional race-based oppression* which he defines as “the network of institutional structures, policies, and practices that create advantages and benefits for the dominant social identity group, and discrimination, oppression, and disadvantages for people from the non-dominant social identity groups.”¹¹

Racism, then, will be understood for this conversation as the unjust exercising of power which can manifest at the institutional, macro, level when policies, power, or resources are shaped and channeled to advantage or disadvantage groups of people. It must be noted that while abuses of power are not equivalent to racism, institutionalized racism always stems from an abuse of power. Because the issue of institutionalized racial oppression is intrinsically connected to the use and abuse of power as it relates to marginalized, impoverished, and powerless groups in society, the discussion to follow will (1) provide an overview of the Biblical theme of the use and abuse of power, (2) highlight the Bible’s perspective on the treatment of marginalized and powerless groups in society, and (3) examine the gospel as a recourse in the fight against contemporary institutional racism.

In the creation account, God made humanity in His own image and likeness. One scholar links the origin of people to God’s compassion: “All humanity, without exception, originated in the creating act of God, and all humans are the object of God’s love and care.”¹² God purposed

⁹ Rosado “The Undergirding Factor.”

¹⁰ Hoyt, “The Pedagogy” (229).

¹¹ Hoyt, “The Pedagogy” (233).

¹² Barreto. “Racism.” (104)

man to have dominion over all creation.¹³ Man was given power and authority over the earth. Man had the responsibility of naming and caring for every subordinate creature. The very opening act of the human story displays God giving power to humanity to serve and to care for all of creation, and arguably to serve and care for all of humanity as well. Power was designed for and delegated for service, as man enjoyed an unhindered relationship with God, with creation, and with one another.

Genesis 3 accounts for the fall of humankind. Adam and Eve, who were given power to rule and steward the earth, were corrupted. From that fateful moment on, man has struggled to use power for its intended purposes. Humans have used power for selfish gain rather than selfless service to others. In the Fall, man's dominion was distorted, resulting in an inherent temptation to dominate other parts of creation.¹⁴ One chapter later, in Genesis 4, Cain and Abel, Adam and Eve's children, disagree vehemently. Cain and Abel present gifts to the Lord. In his anger, Cain overpowers Abel and kills him. The strength given to Cain to tend to and serve creation, he, in turn, uses to kill his brother. Here and in many other Biblical accounts, the issue of misused power and strength is shown to be the story of humanity .

Israel's history is saturated by the theme of misused power, as well this motif is seen in Egypt's suppression of Israel.¹⁵ Egypt was an international power that enslaved a people of whom they were afraid. Out of a desire to keep their power, Egypt abused its power. God shows His nature, as "Exodus shows God's indignation over the oppression of his people in slavery and the liberating character of a God who walks in solidarity with oppressed peoples."¹⁶ God

¹³ Genesis 1:26-28

¹⁴ Thought given from a lecture by Dr. Blaine Charette on September 21, 2016

¹⁵ Exodus 1:8-14

¹⁶ Barreto. "Racism." (104)

identifies Himself not with the powerful but the oppressed. The abuse of power then becomes a significant theme in the Deuteronomic law. The command for Israel's leaders to "judge fairly" was not something to be taken lightly.¹⁷ Those with political power were required to use it well, and the same went for those who had economic resources. Leviticus brings up how those with economic resources are to utilize them to help others in need. Their strength must be used for service. God, spoke through Moses to His people, commanding, "And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God."¹⁸ God expects people with power and resources to use them in a way that treats others fairly and cares well for their felt needs.

In antiquity, widows and orphans were often understood to be easily marginalized, powerless, and oppressed groups of people. In that patriarchal society that sharply differs from contemporary Western society, women who were husbandless and children who were fatherless were not only missing a paternal figure, they had no one to care financially for them. They had no physical protection from danger. These weaker demographic groups may have gone without a home, shelter, and food. They were marginalized from society, easily forgotten, and disadvantaged. Because of this status, God made special provisions for widows and orphans, a theme found throughout Scripture.¹⁹ God was so adamant about this provision for the subjugated classes that He identified Himself as a "helper of the fatherless" and "defender of widows."²⁰

God also commands His people to love and care for the sojourner. A sojourner is a person who travels or has no home country and is sometimes understood as an alien. God

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 16:18-19

¹⁸ Leviticus 19:10

¹⁹ Exodus 22:22, Deuteronomy 14:28-29, Job 29:12, Jeremiah 7:6, Zechariah 7:9-10

²⁰ Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 10:14, 68:5

connects love for society's marginalized people groups closely to love of those who hail from different lands, nations, and races. God and therefore Israel, love the alien and stranger. From the Torah through the prophets, provisions are made for the stranger and the marginalized in society. The continuous demand through the prophets for justice was built around the ideas of provision, equality, and liberation for the poor, weak, and oppressed.²¹ When the narrative moves into the story of kingship, this theme is echoed even more forcefully.

God warned Israel about the dangers of having a king. A king would take Israel's sons and daughters, exploit their resources, take their fields and flocks, and put their people to work.²² Nevertheless, Israel did not listen. They instituted a succession of kings and suffered consequences for it. While some noble kings ruled Israel, most of the kings abused their power in some form. Proverbs exhorts the listener, "Do not rob the poor because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate."²³ The prophets declared God's frustration for the abuse of power, influence, and resources:

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages... Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the Lord. But you have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence.²⁴

²¹ Mason, David R. "A Christian Alternative to (Christian) Racism and Antisemitism." (153) *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 37.2 (n.d.): 151-60. *ATLA Religion Database [EBSCO]*. Web.

²² 1 Samuel 8:11-17

²³ Proverbs 22:22

²⁴ Jeremiah 22:13-17

Isaiah is almost bookended by this theme of taking care of the poor and the marginalized. The prophetic book opens by calling his hearers to “learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”²⁵ Then toward Isaiah’s conclusion, God asks, “Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?”²⁶ Ezekiel even wrote that a reason God judged Sodom because she did not “aid the poor and needy.”²⁷ This recasting of Sodom’s blame sounds much more indicative of organized oppression than of egregious debauchery, and shows how deeply God detests such treatment of humanity. The minor prophets continue to show God’s frustration with how Israel treated the marginalized in society.

In his work on Amos, Daniel Timmer writes, “Amos describes and condemns multiform abuses of human power, not only because such behavior is inherently wrong but especially because it constitutes rebellion against Yahweh.”²⁸ The minor prophets declare woes against those who use their power for selfish gain and abuse it by exploiting others, especially when it is the people of God. The exile and return from exile only further emphasizes Israel’s longing for those in power to use it to benefit the powerless in society. The people of God found themselves exiled, enslaved, and ruled by the superpowers of Assyria, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. The Old Testament perpetuates a sense of longing for a king who would exercise his power on behalf of

²⁵ Isaiah 1:17

²⁶ Isaiah 58:6-7

²⁷ Ezekiel 16:49

²⁸ Timmer, Daniel C. “The Use and Abuse of Power in Amos: Identity and Ideology.” (13) *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament (Online)* 39.1 (n.d.): 101-18. *ATLA Religion Database [EBSCO]*. Web.

others. Even Israel's greatest king, David, abused his power, influences, and resources, committing adultery and murder in the process.

When the Gospels unfold, they reveal Jesus as Israel's king, but He is a king unlike any they had ever seen. Jesus came and used his power not for gain but for the benefit and wellbeing of others, specifically the marginalized and powerless in society. Jesus describes the Kingdom of God and how the people of God are to use their power, authority, and resources. For example, Jesus affirmed Moses's teachings about the way to treat the poor and marginalized, saying, "When you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind."²⁹ Jesus actually saw caring for the powerless as the purpose of his the-last-shall-be-first ministry: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed."³⁰ Jesus' ministry was often characterized by his care for society's marginalized and powerless. One distinguishing feature of Jesus' ministry was His constant attack and sharp critiques of the Jewish leaders of His day. In one discourse, Jesus accused them of neglecting "the weightier matters of the law--justice, mercy, and faith"³¹ because they were greedy and self-indulgent.³²

Jesus' disciples often argued about their place in the Kingdom, asking who would be the greatest or sit at His right and left hands. In response to this posturing, Jesus contrasted the way the people of God are to view power with the way that the world abuses power:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones

²⁹ Luke 14:13

³⁰ Luke 14:18

³¹ Matthew 23:22-25

³² Mason. "A Christian." (153)

exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.³³

Jesus' response to His disciples exemplifies His teaching, person, and redemptive work. First of all, it shows that Jesus taught that the people of His Kingdom were to be the least self-aggrandizing servants. They were to identify and to associate with society's marginalized and oppressed. They were not to follow the example portrayed by those who ruled over them, but His disciples were to take care of "the least of these...cloth the naked, feed the hungry, and visit the imprisoned."³⁴ This is how Jesus' disciples were to exercise their authority. This lifestyle was not only an outworking of Jesus' teaching; it was a demonstration of His person. Jesus is a King who came not to be served but to serve. This juxtaposition of monarchy with menial labor may have been best highlighted when He washed His disciples' feet.³⁵ This humble use of power is central to the heart of Jesus' redemptive work.

The ultimate expression of Jesus' use of power for service was His death on the cross. He explained His actions by saying that, "The Son of Man came...to give his life as a ransom for many."³⁶ Kings would give a ransom to gain something that they wanted, but King Jesus gave up His life as a ransom to offer something that His enemies desperately needed. Jesus is the ultimate expression of power and authority used in service to others.

One of the greatest surprises for many in Israel was that Jesus used His authority to serve

³³ Matthew 20:25-28

³⁴ Matthew 25:40

³⁵ John 13

³⁶ Mark 10:45

those of other races. Jesus' ministry was incredible enough. He served the marginalized, poor, and oppressed people of Israel, but He took it a whole step further by serving the Gentiles. His ministry was not merely a spiritual one; it reached to those of other races and dealt with sociological concerns. He treated the Samaritan woman at the well with respect and dignity.³⁷ He elevated the image of what a good Samaritan could be.³⁸ He healed Canaanites³⁹ and Romans.⁴⁰ Jesus was even enraged by the disrespect for prayer in the temple's Gentile court that was intended to be a place of prayer for all nations.⁴¹ Most famously, Jesus commissions His disciples to make disciples of all nations.⁴² The Gospel writers picked up on this intention so much that both Matthew and Mark, for example, used a despised Roman centurion as the person who acknowledges Jesus' identity. Barreto wrote that, "The good news of Jesus Christ is directed to all ethnicities, races, and peoples. The inclusion of the Gentiles within divine inheritance and the vision of Christ as the one who came to break down barriers teach us that there is no place for prejudice or racism."⁴³ The New Testament church and writers were deeply impacted by this broad scope of Christ's outreach.

Acts 2 depicts the day of Pentecost, the day some would say inaugurated the church. The believers, filled with the Spirit and speaking in tongues, were understood in languages from all throughout the world. At the inception of the church, believers were filled with the Spirit. That powerful moment celebrates a bringing together of cultures, nations, and races in praise to God. Acts 6 depicts a situation where power, resources, and race were all intertwined. Within the

³⁷ Samaritans were an ethnic group despised by Israel

³⁸ Luke 10:25-37

³⁹ Matthew 15:22-29

⁴⁰ Luke 7:1-10

⁴¹ Matthew 12:12

⁴² Matthew 28:18-20

⁴³ Barreto. "Racism." (105)

racially-mixed Jewish and Gentile community of believers some Greek widows were getting overlooked in the distribution of food. Consequently, the apostles appointed people to make sure these hungry people were fed. Their power was used in service of others. The continuing work of Jesus Christ in the church both brought these two racial groups together and then made sure that all of their physical needs were met. Resources were shared and distributed to ensure all of the needs of the newly-formed community were met. Power was used by those in the dominant culture to serve those who were without power and likely to be marginalized.

The New Testament writers condemn both those who hoarded resources and abused power as well as those whose racial prejudices led to overt, albeit implicit, acts of racism. Luke writes about the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, who attempted to hoard what they had from the community rather than distribute it to make sure all the needs were met.⁴⁴ Luke makes the point that in the genesis of the church “there were no needy people among them [the church]” because everyone uses their resources to serve others in their community..⁴⁵ While these instances were not about ethnicities, they do reinforce the Scriptures’ theme of how to use resources and power to benefit those who may be disenfranchised. Paul called out those in the Corinthian church who were gluttons while their brothers in the church starved.⁴⁶ Paul also reminded the apostles that he was eager to remember the poor.⁴⁷ The letter to the church in Galatia made it clear that in Christ the divisions between races, Jews and Greeks, and social classes, slaves and free, are obliterated.⁴⁸ Paul believed this sentiment so much that he criticized

⁴⁴ Acts 5:1-11

⁴⁵ Acts 4:34

⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:21

⁴⁷ Galatians 2:10

⁴⁸ Galatians 3:28

Peter for not living in step with the gospel and treating Gentiles differently than Jews.⁴⁹ James, the half-brother of Jesus, saw that true religion consists of meeting the needs of the widow and orphan—society’s powerless and marginalized.⁵⁰ True religion must result in using power and influence to serve.

The proper treatment of other ethnicities is not an idea only presented in the New Testament. The Old Testament is filled with passages about treating those of other nationalities with dignity. The Torah focuses on this principles. The people of God are called to love God and their neighbor, but the same command is also given to love the alien and stranger.⁵¹ The alien and stranger were undoubtedly people of other races. Israel was commanded to love all people because Israel herself was once a wandering alien and stranger looking for a home—a story with which the American church should resonate. Love for those of other races stems from the commonality that all humans share: the image of God. Love for God cannot be severed from love for all people whom He created.

The Old Testament creates provisions for people who were not Jews by birth (those of other races) to become a part of the people of God. God is known for showering compassion on other people groups, such as Nineveh.⁵² The nation of Israel’s existence was intended for the express purpose of being a light to other races, so that all people would know and serve YHWH.⁵³ The goal from the beginning of the people of God was that God’s name would be magnified among all the nations.⁵⁴ The culmination of this aim at the end of the Biblical

⁴⁹ Galatians 1-2

⁵⁰ James 1:27

⁵¹ Leviticus 19:34 and Deuteronomy 10:19

⁵² Jonah 4:11

⁵³ Isaiah 42:6 and Genesis 12:1-3

⁵⁴ Malachi 1:11

narrative includes a future scenario where every nation, tribe, and tongue is united together in and because of Jesus.⁵⁵ John's Revelation of Jesus Christ describes Jesus as the One who is Faithful and True, righteously enacting justice⁵⁶ to all the nations. The Scripture closes by envisioning a day when all power and authority will be exercised justly to serve all people. Barreto notes this in saying, "The prophetic visions [found in Isaiah 65 and Revelation 21] of the future desired by God include all of humanity and not just one specific people group."⁵⁷

To understand this Biblical theme another way, one can ask and answer four questions. Where are we? The fall has resulted in humanity's inability to handle their God-given dominion to care for creation. Instead of using power to serve one another, mankind misuses it to dominate one another. Sin distorts our ability to relate to God, to one another, and to all of creation. Those with power have the temptation and tendency to abuse their power for selfish gain and in that distortion, they mistreat the widows and fatherless of society. This breaking in relationship ultimately reflects the disruption in relationship between God, who identifies Himself as a Husband and Father to His people.

Who are we? We who were once estranged from God are now known as His bride and children, called to bring others into this loving, serving relationship with God and one another. What is wrong? We mistakenly crave holding onto power rather than to use it to benefit others. Structures, policies, and practices are created that advantage the dominant social group and disadvantages the non-dominant social groups. This misuse of power perpetuates institutional racism in the world today. What is the remedy? We must encounter the reality of Jesus Christ: God, who gives up His power for those who are not only different from Him, but are actually His

⁵⁵ Revelation 7:9

⁵⁶ Biblical justice always dealt with mercy and provision for the powerless.

⁵⁷ Barreto. "Racism." (105)

enemies. Christians must become aware of their powerlessness to save themselves and remember how God, in Jesus Christ, gave up His power to meet their deepest need. They must not fear losing, and in result hoard, power and recourses because all of their needs have been met in Jesus Christ. They must join His mission to attend to the marginalized in society. True religion, as James describes it, translates into caring for the widow and orphan. God identifies Himself as the Protector of widows and orphans, including those who do not hail from Hebrew backgrounds. He cares for the marginalized and exercises His power to help and elevate them; the church must continue that work of redemptive, empowering reconciliation.

Racism understood in terms of ethnic based prejudice is not the real issue; the misuse and displacement of power and recourses is the issue, and Scripture clearly articulates how power and recourses must be used to meet the needs all people. The abuse and misuse of power is a temptation and sin that came as a result of the Fall. The misuse of power leading to racism has plagued mankind from the beginning of time. It is not an isolated issue but one that has been experienced in every culture and nation throughout time. Man's historic inability to use power as God designed cannot be ignored, but what is the solution? What continues to impede the efforts of those devoted to solving the issue of institutional racism? Rosado sums up the uncomfortable rhetoric on institutionalized racism accurately:

From a macro-perspective, only Whites as a group can be labeled as racist in [American] society, for the socioeconomic system is structured in their favor. Now this does not imply that given the reserve in a shift in power, that minority groups would not do the same, because in all probability they would. Thus, the problem is not one of race or ethnicity; the problem is the basic human condition, which God long ago described in the following words: "The heart is deceitful above all things,

and desperately corrupt; who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). This is why Lord Acton declared: “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”⁵⁸

The misuse of power leading to institutionalized racism is a condition of the Fall. To change what groups have power does not solve the real heart of the problem because it does not get to the core. The issue is the human heart. The issue is sin. Sin impedes man’s ability to use God-given power and recourses well. The misuse of power is a condition of the Fall, therefore, it is redeemed in the work of Jesus Christ. The church, therefore, must adopt a redeemed view of power that leads to action on behalf of the powerless.

The church must see it as their responsibility to uproot racism and to correct systems that promote it. We must see misuses of power as issues near the heart of God. They must tend to those who have been marginalized in society: the alien, widow, and orphan. From their genesis, the people of God have been called to care for and elevate the condition of the marginalized. To be specific, in America in 2016, the African-American community represents the Biblical widow and orphan: a group of people who do not have the same power and ability to thrive as others demographic groups. African Americans have been systematically stripped of their power, disadvantaged, oppressed, and marginalized for centuries. While they are not the only minority group to experience oppression, they are and have been major recipients of discriminatory treatment in America.

Those in the dominant, Anglo, culture in America must use their power to help empower the African-American community both collectively as the church and individually as Christians. If Rosado’s analysis is correct in speculating that American society has “the problem of a homogeneous value system operating within a heterogeneous society,” then those in the

⁵⁸ Rosado. “The Undergirding Factor.”

dominant culture must discover and admit the multiple ways that they have been beneficiaries of privilege, even if it is a system to which they have not intentionally contributed. Responsibility lies not only with the dominant culture, but with all people, to do whatever their part can be. The African-American community, as well as other minority cultures, must work alongside their brothers and sisters in the dominant culture to improve access within the larger society to empowering opportunities for all.

Christ followers must all join hands with their marginalized and powerless brothers and sisters to work on dismantling institutionalized racism in their country. They must be engaged wholeheartedly in the work of the Kingdom, in the way that Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby delineates: “Liberating the enslaved, creating the conditions of human flourishing, and bringing in the common good.”⁵⁹ They must become defenders of the widow and orphan and lovers of the sojourner. God cares for the marginalized in society and is, therefore, avidly opposed to systematic misuse of power expressed in institutional racism. The power of sin has corrupted the human heart’s ability to use power well, but in Jesus Christ, ultimate power has been used and sacrificed to meet the needs of the powerless. Christians must first experience that liberation from sin’s power in Christ. They must be empowered by His Spirit to live out that liberation. Most importantly, they must be about His work until He returns:

The Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners...⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Welby, Justin. “Does Inequality Really Matter?” (13) *Anglican Theological Review* 98.1 (n.d.): 7-13. *ATLA Religion Database [EBSCO]*. Web.

⁶⁰ Deuteronomy 10:17-19

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Follow Belmar Baptist Church to never miss another show. Join free & follow Belmar Baptist Church. The Blasphemy of Racism & the Power of the Gospel. by Belmar Baptist Church. Follow. 46:54. Racism and religion - Whilst the subject of religion is not amongst the key themes on the agenda at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, the role that religion plays in racial discrimination has dominated talks. Wednesday 05 September, 2001. Racism and religion. Whilst the subject of religion is not amongst the key themes on the agenda at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, the role that religion plays in racial discrimination has dominated talks. Topics of discussion have included how faith communities are hoping to combat racial prejudice, and also how religion can make existing racial and ethnic divisions worse. Racism tarnishes the soul of America. The Martin situation once again points the spotlight on a subject matter that many deemed pass in light of the election of an African-American president and the supposed entrance into a post-racial American social landscape. Yet it shouldn't surprise anyone who understands man's fallen nature when vestiges of racist overtures arise within our communities. For racism isn't a political problem to be solved exclusively by policy but a spiritual violation to be addressed by a Christ-centered church. Racism cannot exist primarily as a hot-button political issue. Racism is about people with power, usually white people, discriminating against people of color. People of color can also be racist against other people of color. No one can be racist against a white person because modern racism was born from the determined and systematic oppression of non-white people. You can be biased against white people, just like I can be biased against Patriots fans, but that is not racism. Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (2009) "A wonderful volume analyzing decades of documents, actions, and sometimes failures of the Catholic Church when it comes to racism. "Open Wide Our Hearts," the latest USCCB document against racism, from late 2018. "A document that seeks to connect human dignity with Catholic faith. The Christian Church is the catalyst for addressing historical and contemporary issues regarding the intersections of race and racism that continues to harm communities of color. The United Church of Christ acknowledges and supports the equality of all humans. In 1993, The Nineteenth General Synod called upon UCC congregations in all its settings to be a true multiracial and multicultural church. Twenty-five years later the call continues to go forth. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but the spirit of power, of courage and resolution, to meet difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love which will carry us through opposition." 2 Timothy 1:7. Christians restoring justice for all!