

## **Deconstructing the Notion of Race**

The Sam Sharpe Lecture Series  
Manchester & Birmingham, England  
September, 2013

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[F]rom the hour of their birth, some men are marked out for subjection, others for rule...It is clear that just as some are by nature free, so others are by nature slaves, and for these latter the condition of slavery is both beneficial and just

Aristotle<sup>1</sup>

Greeks were born to rule barbarians, Mother, not barbarians to rule Greeks. They are slaves by nature; we have freedom in our blood.

Euripides<sup>2</sup>

The Black skin is not a badge of shame, but rather a glorious symbol of ... greatness.

Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940)<sup>3</sup>

The absolute equality of races, physical, political and social is the founding stone of the world and human achievement. [T]he voice of Science, Religion, and practical Politics is one in denying the God-appointed existence of super-races or of races naturally and inevitably and eternally inferior.

Pan-African Congress, 1921<sup>4</sup>

[T]he social construction of race does not make the biological existence of race a fact. The myth of biological race needs to be debunked in our minds and in others'. As long as people believe that humanity is "naturally" divided into biological races, they will give a significance and finality to ethnic groups that are not warranted.

Eloise Meneses<sup>5</sup>

There is no conceptual basis for race except racism.

Charles Hirschman<sup>6</sup>

## Introduction

There are four main reasons why this evening's assignment gives me much pleasure.

The first is the opportunity it affords me to visit the United Kingdom once again. It has never ceased to amaze me that, at the height of its power, this small country maintained control over such a vast portion of the earth! By 1914, apart from its own population of 46 million, Britain ruled 400 million people around the world<sup>7</sup> and by 1922, Britain controlled the world's largest empire with a population of 458 million, comprising one-fifth of the existing world population and covering nearly twenty-five per cent of the world's land space.<sup>8</sup>

It is also amazing how the perception of this country has changed over the years. Consider this: the Greek orator Cicero once gave what he no doubt considered wise counsel to his friend, Atticus. This is what he said: "Do not obtain your slaves from Britain because they are so stupid and so utterly incapable of being taught that they are not fit to form a part of the household of Athens."<sup>9</sup>

Later, in the seventh century, a North African, one of the Moors who had conquered Spain, described northern Europeans in the following way: "They are of cold temperament and never reach maturity. They are of great stature and of a white colour. But they lack all sharpness of wit and penetration of intellect."<sup>10</sup>

How things have changed! Today, hardly would anyone paint a portrait of the people of this country in those unflattering terms. Nor could anyone justifiably do so now and perhaps also ever!

The second reason for my pleasure at this appointment is the opportunity to be here in the British Midlands where my father, who was among those who came to England in the wave of migration from the Caribbean after the Second World War,<sup>11</sup> spent thirteen years of his adult life contributing to the development of this great country. He came to the UK in order to ensure that he could fulfil his economic responsibility as a husband and father. As soon as his two youngest children were close to completing their High School education in their home country, he returned to Jamaica and shared with his family stories of his experience overseas. None of the children my father returned to embrace in Jamaica considered migration to the United Kingdom an option to be pursued, but they were grateful for what this country helped their father to do.

The third reason for the pleasure I find in addressing you today is the opportunity this lecture affords me to be associated with the Sam Sharpe lecture series. I am particularly grateful that the Committee responsible for these lectures accepted my proposal of the subject of race as the focus for this lecture. Especially when we remember the one whose life and contribution inspired this lecture series, it is entirely appropriate that we should consider the subject of race, laying bare the vastness and the pernicious nature

of the sin reflected in an understanding of race as a biological reality. Our goal is to clearly identify what lies at the core of the insidious understanding of race as a property of human beings, rather than a socially constructed identity, and to expose some of its dangerous implications.

### **In Manchester**

Fourthly, I gratefully acknowledge the opportunity to deliver this Sam Sharpe Lecture here in this city of Manchester. In my preparation for today, I recalled the way English slave trader, William Snelgrave, characterized the opinion of British slave traders during the eighteenth century:

Tho' to traffic in human creatures may at first sight appear barbarous, inhuman and unnatural, yet the traders herein have as much to plead in their own excuse as can be said for some other branches of trade, namely, the *advantage* of it.... In a word, from this trade proceeds benefits far outweighing all either real or pretended mishaps and inconveniences.<sup>12</sup>

This city of Manchester was a significant beneficiary of the slave trade. As Eric Williams explains, "The capital accumulated by Liverpool from the slave trade poured into the hinterland to fertilize the energies of Manchester."<sup>13</sup> Goods made in Manchester were shipped from Liverpool to the Slave Coast of Africa, to the Caribbean and to America. Much of the wealth of both Liverpool and Manchester, especially during the eighteenth century, was related to the abominable Atlantic trade in enslaved human beings.

### **In Birmingham**

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Yesterday, I was in Manchester, which was the centre of the cotton trade during the nineteenth century. Here in Birmingham, I have come to what was once the centre of the gun trade. Let noted Caribbean historian, Eric Williams, explain:

Slave trading demanded goods more gruesome than woolen and cotton manufactures; fetters and chains and padlocks were needed to fasten the

Negroes more securely on the slave ships... Iron bars were the trading medium on a large part of the African coast and were equivalent to four copper bars... Guns formed a regular part of every African cargo. Birmingham was the centre of the gun trade.<sup>15</sup>

In the eighteenth century, Birmingham supplied the sugar stoves, rollers for crushing cane, wrought iron and nails needed on the plantations in the West Indies. In Africa, Birmingham guns were exchanged for men and, as Eric Williams states, "it was a common saying that the price of a Negro was one Birmingham gun."<sup>16</sup> In the late eighteenth century, Birmingham admitted its manufacturing industry's considerable dependency on the slave trade. Birmingham's businessmen explained that "Abolition would ruin the town and impoverish its inhabitants."<sup>17</sup> In the nineteenth century, Birmingham guns were exchanged for African palm oil.

Although, right here in Birmingham, a society to abolish slavery was started in 1788 - and we applaud that development - we should not forget the extent to which this city was built on the oppression of Africans in Africa and the exploitation of enslaved Africans in the Caribbean.

### **Continuing the Lecture**

Understanding how the United Kingdom flourished as a result of slavery and the slave trade, one of your own citizens, James Boswell (1740-1795), once declared that:

To abolish a status which in all ages God has sanctioned and man has continued would not only be robbery to an innumerable class of our fellow-subjects, but it would be extreme cruelty to the African savages, a portion of whom it saves from massacre or intolerable bondage in their own country, and introduces into a much happier state of life.... To abolish that trade would be to 'shut the gates of mercy on mankind.'<sup>18</sup>

Boswell's claims should surprise no one for he considered the enslaved state to be superior to life in freedom in Africa. Do you recall what he said in one of his unforgettable poems depicting how happy and fortunate enslaved persons were?

The cheerful gang! - the negroes see  
Perform the task of industry:  
Ev'n at their labour hear them sing,  
While time flies quick on downy wing;  
Finish'd the bus'ness of the day,  
No human beings are more gay:  
Of food, clothes, cleanly lodging sure,  
Each has his property secure;  
Their wives and children protected,  
In sickness they are not neglected;

And when old age brings a release,  
Their grateful days they end in peace.<sup>19</sup>

If Boswell's assumptions about race reflected where England was in the eighteenth century, he was not as forthright in his disdainful opinion as was the British Foreign Office in the twentieth century. The manoeuvres of the United States, Britain and Australia resulted in the failure of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference to agree the reasonable proposal for the international community to affirm "the principle of equality of nations and just treatment of their nationals."<sup>20</sup> In response, this is what the British Foreign Office stated in a confidential memorandum:

The "RACE EQUALITY" question is a highly combustible one... The white and the coloured races cannot and will not amalgamate. One or the other must be the ruling caste.... There is, therefore, at present in practical politics no solution to the race question.<sup>21</sup>

I have been encouraged by news of some of the initiatives being taken by churches and their leaders here in the United Kingdom in recent decades, to deal with the legacy and the prevalence of the sin of racial prejudice that was once manifested in the enslavement of black people in the West Indies. Gratefully, the number of forgetful beneficiaries of this legacy seems to be on the decrease.

Churches in countries whose history is marked by the experience of systematically oppressing others through slavery need to ensure that their acknowledgement of the economic benefits they and their communities have reaped from slavery is accompanied by determined efforts to root out racism from within their ranks. They are also called to bear prophetic witness to the wider society on behalf of those who suffer from negative racial profiling. I have come to the conclusion that, unless these initiatives include a determined effort to deconstruct the notion of race, the efforts may fairly be characterized as equivalent to polishing dirty floors that were not first scrubbed to remove the unwanted and unsightly particles that stuck to them.

In this lecture, I propose to briefly characterize the relation of ethnicity and human dignity in the thinking of Sam Sharpe, who was one of the collaborators in the project to secure liberation from enslavement for people residing in the Caribbean. After this, I will discuss the emergence and exposure of the myth informing the ideology of race and then propose certain priority steps that need to be taken if the deconstruction of the idea of race is taken seriously in the ecclesial community.

### **Sharpe, Human Dignity and Ethnicity**

The Right Excellent Samuel Sharpe, National Hero of Jamaica, was born in Jamaica of African parents who had been captured and transported to Jamaica where they were enslaved.<sup>22</sup> His parents were among the millions of persons of African origin, who were

forcibly removed from Africa with the intention of enslavement in the Caribbean, North America and South America.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the transatlantic trade in Africans has been described as:

the largest forced human migration in recorded history. The extent of the human suffering associated with this involuntary relocation of men, women and children may never be known. But their shipment – packed and stored beneath the deck of ships like commodities – constitutes one of the greatest horrors of modern times.<sup>24</sup>

Sharpe accepted the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached by formerly enslaved Africans who went to Jamaica with the message of the Gospel. His faith was also informed by the teaching of the missionaries sent from among the same European people who undertook to deprive him of his dignity and to exploit his labour for pecuniary gain. From his reading of the Bible, Sharpe came to see the fundamental error on which the sin of racism rests – the error that nourished the very roots of the system of slavery as it was practised in the Caribbean. This is the odious belief that Sharpe, and those whose skin colour looked like his, were not to be regarded as people who shared the same dignity and worth as those who exploited them.

Sam Sharpe realized that the oppressive slaveholders believed that he, and others like him, lacked a rightful claim to the humanity the enslavers reserved for themselves. Resolute in his rejection of this belief, Sharpe was willing to offer up his life if his dignity were going to be continually disrespected and his humanity perpetually denied. “I would rather die on yonder gallows than live in slavery,” were the immortal words he declared before his life was taken from him.<sup>25</sup>

Currently, we do not have access to any literary works by Sam Sharpe – the text of sermons he preached and the Bible studies he delivered, for example. On account of this, we are forced to rely on secondary sources for an understanding of what Sharpe believed. Most of the available sources were compiled by members of the oppressor class that sought to deprive Sharpe of his human dignity. Even when statements are attributed to Sharpe, these are reported by Europeans domiciled in Jamaica in the nineteenth century. The cumulative evidence from the available sources suggests the following generalized wording of four of Sharpe’s convictions expressed in the language of the contemporary age:

First, all human beings are made by God, who invests in them dignity and rights that are inalienable and inviolable, including the right to be free.

Second, slavery is inconsistent with biblical teaching on human freedom because it represents fundamentally disregard for the freedom of God and readiness to dehumanize persons. It is predicated on the idea that enslavers are entitled to exploit the enslaved for their own material advantage.

Sharpe's belief that slavery represents the commodification of the enslaved and their exploitation for the benefit of the enslavers is what lay at the very foundation of the Baptist War. Asked about the origin of his idea that all people have a right to be free, Sharpe identified the Bible as the source from which he gained the idea<sup>26</sup>

Third, since slavery represents a denial of human dignity, the enslaved have an obligation to take non-violent action to secure their freedom. If, in the pursuit of their liberty through non-violent protest, they encounter violence from those who oppress them, the enslaved are entitled to act in self-defence.

Fourth, it seems reasonable to assert that Sharpe understood that considerations of ethnicity were fundamental to the operation of the plantation economy in which black people were forced to serve the interests of white people. There is no avoiding the question of ethnicity and "race" when we are reflecting on the legacy of the Honourable Samuel Sharpe.

Sharpe knew that the practice of slavery in the Caribbean was undergirded by racist presumptions. According to Methodist missionary, Henry Bleby, Sharpe witnessed to having "learnt from his Bible that the whites had no more right to hold black people in slavery than the black people had to make the white people slaves; and for his own part, he would rather die than live in slavery."<sup>27</sup> Sharpe did not believe white people had any right to make merchandise of a human being. For him, slavery was "a monstrous injustice."<sup>28</sup>

Like Sharpe, many of the Africans who suffered the scourge of slavery felt the brunt of the violent disrespect for their dignity and humanity. They resisted the determined resolve of the estates to extract and benefit from their labour without adequately compensating them. Eventually, many turned to violent protest as a last resort.

When Sharpe's forbears passed through the door of no return,<sup>29</sup> the captured Africans did not know what awaited them in the so-called New World. However, they would have had a premonition of it, when, piled up in a cellar like the one at the place now called the Slave Castle in Ghana, they suffered brutal dehumanization while hearing the joyful sounds of Anglicans at worship in the room under which they were incarcerated.<sup>30</sup>

Arriving in the Caribbean and sold to European businessmen by European traders, the enslaved lost every semblance of self-determination. They were now listed as part of the merchandise on the sugar estate on which they were forced to work.<sup>31</sup> Enslaved people in Western Jamaica responded to the denial of their humanity, the violation of their dignity and the exploitation of their labour. They decided that, beginning immediately after Christmas, 1831, they would cease working until those who robbed them of the benefits of their toil were ready to offer them meaningful compensation. All they were expecting was 2s 6p per week, the amount paid to so-called "workhouse men."<sup>32</sup>

What Sharpe really desired was the purchase of freedom through the medium of a massive work stoppage. What eventuated, however, was the dusty brilliance of the night time sky as the enslaved put sugar cane plantations and buildings to the torch in the evening of December 27, 1831.<sup>33</sup> To use the words of Methodist Missionary, Henry Bleby, "It was not Sharpe's purpose to wade through blood to freedom, although he himself was prepared to die in pursuit of freedom."<sup>34</sup> Yet, it was for that work stoppage and its subsequent rampage that he and several hundred others were executed. Today, close to 200 years later, I am presenting a lecture in Sharpe's honour here in the land that produced the rascals who exploited Sharpe's labour in slavery and then deprived him of his life. Delroy Reid-Salmon claimed<sup>35</sup> that, after "excavating the layers of ... mythology that engulf ... the human subject in history,"<sup>36</sup> he had mined the thought that Sharpe affirmed the equality of all human beings and the divine gift of freedom for everyone. Reid-Salmon offers a compelling interpretation of Sharpe's theological anthropology.

### **The Emergence and Exposure of the Myth Undergirding Race Ideology**

Slavery existed long before the Europeans built a monument in its honour in the West Indies and it assumed many forms over the years.<sup>37</sup> After the Romans abandoned this island [the United Kingdom] which was a remote outpost of their empire and the Germanic tribes captured it, some of the people who lived here were sold into slavery.

It was the "civilised" Romans who introduced slavery to the "barbarians" of Western Europe, to borrow the description of Jamaican historian, Richard Hart, who is familiar with the terms employed by the slavers of those days.<sup>38</sup> It is said that, at the start of the eleventh century, nearly ten percent of the British population was enslaved.

After Muslims from North Africa conquered the Iberian Peninsula from the Romans, they repelled their attackers and enslaved those whom they took as prisoners of war. Over much of their period of dominance, between 711 and 1492, the Muslims in Iberia enslaved both blacks and whites. As James Sweet<sup>39</sup> has shown, they introduced "invidious distinctions" between black and white slaves, naming them differently – '*abd* and *mamluk* – and treating them differently. White slaves served mainly as household helpers, and blacks were assigned the arduous tasks that needed to be done. Even free blacks were identified as '*abid* (plural of '*abd*).<sup>40</sup>

White Iberians living in the context of the prevailing Muslim attitude to blacks shared that attitude themselves. And when the days of Iberian subjugation by the Moors came to an end, the Spanish and Portuguese powers, during the fourteenth century, looked for a zone over which to exert control and to expand their sphere of influence. They turned their attention to the south and west. By this time, however, they had already espoused notions of the inferiority of blacks which, in the eighteenth century, were refined by



Europeans presenting themselves as scientists into an identifiable and clear racist ideology which predicated black inferiority on biological criteria.

What resulted from the Iberian expansion project was a form of slavery that reflected the deepest depravity of the human mind. As Hart has said:

The ancient institution of slavery ... was transplanted to the Americas where it was adapted, almost beyond recognition of its earlier forms, to serve a new commercial purpose. Its horrors were intensified a thousandfold."<sup>41</sup>

Orlando Patterson's identification of slavery as "social death" describes very well the form of slavery in the West Indies. The enslaved suffered a "perpetual state of dishonour,"<sup>42</sup> being permanently and violently alienated from others, becoming socially dead.

The point being made is that when Europeans introduced the institution of slavery in the Caribbean, it was in the context of a developing prejudice toward black people. Slaveholders in the Caribbean were undoubtedly aware that those from whose dehumanization they profited were people whose ethnic origins were different from theirs. It is generally agreed, however, that when the British trade in slaves was at its height, racist thinking had not yet achieved its most heinous form. Over the centuries, the developing ideology of race was to acquire the mask of scientific foundation which was effective in its power to deceive its subscribers. Scientific racism mischaracterized the notion of race as a biological reality and bequeathed a legacy of white racism that many still struggle to overcome today.

Nor were the Iberians the only ones who helped construct the myth of blacks as inferior to whites. Other Europeans shared liberally in the manufacture of this most shameful ideological edifice that housed such persons as a bookkeeper from the New Yarmouth plantation in Vere, Jamaica, who, in 1823, informed the governor of Jamaica that:

There are a race of beings that cannot bear prosperity.... It will be a lapse of ages before the Negro can even participate of the blessings of freedom; the very name of the African must cease to exist in their memories before their customs are obliterated.<sup>43</sup>

### **Strengthening the Foundations of Scientific Racism**

Many were the Europeans who laid the foundations for the rampant disrespect for human dignity that lies at the very heart of the idea of race. Ivan Hannaford has claimed that "there is very little evidence of a conscious idea of race until after the Reformation."<sup>44</sup> Whether this is so or not, as James Sweet has said, "the treatment of

black Africans from the Middle Ages to the early modern period appears to be racism without race.”<sup>45</sup> This is in keeping with Orlando Patterson’s observation that “the absence of an articulated doctrine of racial superiority does not necessarily imply behavioural tolerance in the relations between peoples of somatically different groups.”<sup>46</sup>

The list of people who helped build the edifice of scientific racism is long and some of the names included in it are likely to surprise those who are not sufficiently familiar with some of their writings. I will refer briefly to aspects of the contribution of Hume, Linnaeus, Blumenbach and Cuvier, adding brief comments on three Britons - Charles White, Thomas Carlyle and Robert Knox.

Noted British philosopher, David Hume, claimed that people who lived in the South “are inferior to the rest of the species and are incapable of higher attainment of the human mind.”<sup>47</sup> Although he did not support slavery which, according to his utilitarian calculus, was not advantageous to the overall happiness of humankind, Hume had little respect for blacks, whom he described in the following words: “You may obtain anything of the NEGROES by offering them strong drink; and may easily prevail upon them to sell, not only their children, but their wives and mistresses, for a case of brandy.”<sup>48</sup>

In a footnote appearing in one of his works, Hume said this: “There never was a civilized nation of any complexion than white” and he opined that “In Jamaica, indeed, they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning, but ‘tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly.”<sup>49</sup> Hume attempted damage control when, criticised for this claim, he revised the footnote containing this claim before he died. He stated instead that he was “apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites” and that: “There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that (black) complexion, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation.”<sup>50</sup>

Britain produced Charles White, the physician who founded the Manchester Royal Infirmary, and who, in 1799, described white people as “the most beautiful of the human race.” Claiming that whites were the “most removed from brute creation,” White said: “No one will doubt [the] superiority” of white people.<sup>51</sup>

Over the years, many other well known figures helped promote the idea of white people as superior to blacks. In 1849, in an address to those he deemed his “philanthropic friends,” Scottish historian, Thomas Carlyle,<sup>52</sup> spelt out what he called his “painful duty” to remind them of the estate of blacks who, in his opinion, were created with the endowments to make them fit to serve their white European masters. “Idle black people” in the West Indies, he said:

have the right ... to be *compelled* to work as he was fit, and to *do* the Maker's will, who had constructed him with such and such prefigurements of capability. And I incessantly pray Heaven, all men, the whitest alike, and the blackest, the richest and the poorest, in other regions of the world, had attained precisely the same right, the divine right of being compelled (if "permitted" will not answer) to do what work they are appointed for, and not to go idle another minute, in a life so short!"

In 1850, British anatomist, Robert Knox,<sup>53</sup> argued passionately for the superiority of white people over especially black people. "With me," he said, "race, or hereditary descent, is everything; it stamps the man.... The races of men ... differ from each other widely - most widely." <sup>54</sup> "[T]he races of men are not the result of accident; they are not convertible into each other by any contrivance whatsoever. The eternal laws of nature must prevail."<sup>55</sup> "Look all over the globe," he said, "it is always the same; the dark races stand still, the fair progress."<sup>56</sup> "I feel disposed to think that there must be a physical, and consequently, a psychological inferiority in the dark races generally... [owing to] perhaps specific characters in the quality of the brain itself."<sup>57</sup> Knox concluded that the "black races" cannot become civilized. "Their future history must resemble the past. The Saxon race will never tolerate them."<sup>58</sup> Black people are different from white people "in everything as much as in colour."<sup>59</sup> "The races of men when carefully examined will be found to show remarkable **organic** differences."<sup>60</sup>

Whatever may be the disparate estimates of the contribution of each of the persons we have mentioned, hardly is there any doubt concerning Carl Linnaeus' significant contribution to the attempt to predicate racism on the foundation of science.

It was no less a person than the Swiss philosopher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, who sent the following message to the Swedish scientist, Linnaeus: "Tell him I know no greater man on earth."<sup>61</sup> Linnaeus had developed a taxonomy<sup>62</sup> which included categories of species with white Europeans at the top and black Africans at the bottom of the human species. In this taxonomy which, perhaps, still commands its band of supporters today, Linnaeus adopted a four-fold categorization of people as follows:

- Homo Europeaeus, having white skin and identified as gentle and governed by laws;
- Homo Americanus, with red skin and said to be choleric (irritable and easily angered) and governed by customs;
- Homo Asiaticus, with yellow skin and described as haughty and governed by opinion; and
- Homo Afer, with black skin and characterized as indolent and governed by caprice.<sup>63</sup>

What Linnaeus attempted was a scientific taxonomy in which skin colour and behavioural characteristics were alleged to be related biologically. His theory provided what he considered a scientific foundation for classifying people. It provided the bedrock on which scientific racism was erected. On this foundation, deemed respectable by the unsuspecting, the edifice of evil that racism represents found final form.

With the passage of time, the study of “race” that Linnaeus started was to mushroom. In 1795, in the third edition of his work, *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*,<sup>64</sup> the German Johann Blumenbach identified five varieties of humankind: the Caucasian or white race; the Mongolian or yellow race; the Malayan or brown race; the Ethiopian or black race; and the American or red race. At first, Blumenbach held that: “[T]he white color holds the first place,” with people of other skin colour being mere degenerates of the original.<sup>65</sup> Eventually, he attributed skin colour to geography and diet and he concluded the Africans, belong to the human family and are not inferior to the other so-called races. In other words, Blumenbach did not claim that the classification system he developed was immutable.<sup>66</sup>

In the nineteenth century, the French zoologist, Jean Léopold Cuvier, sometimes referred to as Georges Cuvier, reduced Blumenbach’s race classification from five to three: Caucasian, comprising white people with Adam and Eve as their progenitor in what Cuvier claimed was the original race; Mongolian – yellow people; and Ethiopians – black people. Blacks, he said, were “the most degraded of human races, whose form approaches that of the beast and whose intelligence is nowhere great enough to arrive at regular government.”<sup>67</sup>

It took many years for the scientific community to effectively expose the pseudo-science that was used to justify white people subjugating black people and to provide a bulwark against the advance the march toward emancipation of slavery and the humanization of slaveholders.

### **Debunking the Myth of Biological Race**

In the post-Enlightenment period, in which the idea of race achieved full expression as an ideology, many people subscribed to “the claim that there [are] immutable major divisions of humankind, each with biologically transmitted characteristics.”<sup>68</sup> Each race was deemed “a homogeneous group of individuals biologically or linguistically similar to one another and systematically distinguishable” from other so-called races.<sup>69</sup> Over time, prevailing opinion on race became markedly different from it was in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In the aftermath of World War I, a Peace Conference was convened in Paris which was expected to herald a new world order rising from the ash heap created by the war. Some participants hoped the conference would affirm the principle of equality among people

deemed to belong to different racial groupings. However, the contributions of significant white delegates underlined the firm resolve of certain nations, especially Britain, USA, South Africa and Australia, to maintain the principle of racial inequality.

The British representative, Harold Nicholson balked at any suggestion that, “implied the equality of the yellow man with the white man,” not to mention what he termed “the terrific theory of the equality of the white man with the black.”<sup>70</sup> British Prime Minister Lloyd George - a professed Baptist to boot - made an impassioned plea for France not to train what he termed “big nigger armies.”<sup>71</sup> In the end, it took US President Woodrow Wilson to ensure the derailment of the intention of the majority on the League of Nations Commission to affirm “the principle of equality of nations and just treatment of nationals.”<sup>72</sup>

When, in 1948, the United Nations issued the International Declaration of Human Rights, the groundwork was laid for the further undermining of the assumptions informing the ideology of race and the practice of racism. Two years later, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued a *Statement on Race*,<sup>73</sup> declaring that:

Scientists have reached general agreement in recognizing that mankind is one; that all men (sic) belong to the same species, homo sapiens. §1

For all practical social purposes, ‘race’ is not so much a biological phenomenon as a social myth ... [that] has created an enormous amount of social damage. §14

As more and more people began to agree that racism was inconsistent with respect for human rights, the UN General Assembly, in 1963, approved a resolution affirming the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. According to that declaration, “any doctrine of racial differentiation or superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous, and ... there is no justification for racial discrimination either in theory or in practice.”<sup>74</sup>

In 1965, the UN adopted and opened for signature and ratification the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. A year later, an International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination was designated. By 1967, UNESCO gave fuller expression to its understanding of race in a *Statement on Race and Racial Prejudice*.<sup>75</sup> A UNESCO committee of experts from seventeen countries declared:

All men (sic) living today belong to the same species and descend from the same stock. §3a

Current biological knowledge does not permit us to impute cultural achievements to differences in genetic potential. §3c

Racism falsely claims that there is a scientific basis for arranging groups hierarchically in terms of psychological and cultural characteristics that are immutable and innate. §5

During the 1970s, the UN General Assembly adopted the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid. It also declared 1973-1982 as the Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The hope was that the period would be used for concrete action to eliminate the evils it identified. Needless to say, at the end of the decade, little had changed in attitudes to race. Not surprisingly therefore, subsequently, the UN found it necessary to declare a second, and later, a third Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination – 1983-1992 and 1994-2003 respectively.

During this third decade, certain groups within the scientific community made significant decisions to register their rejection of the ideology of race. Take, for example, the Statement on “Race” issued in 1998 by the American Anthropological Association. It explicitly states that:

With the vast expansion of scientific knowledge ... it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups.... Given what we know about the capacity of normal humans to achieve and function within any culture, we conclude that present-day inequalities between so-called “racial” groups are not consequences of their biological inheritance but products of historical and contemporary social, economic, educational, and political circumstances.<sup>76</sup>

The UN convened World Conferences to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination. The first took place in Geneva in 1978 and the second in Durban, South Africa in 2001. The Conference Statement<sup>77</sup> produced by the Second World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance reaffirmed customary principles earlier adumbrated. Notably, it recognized, “with grave concern that, despite the efforts of the international community, the principal objectives of the three Decades to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination [had] not been attained and that countless human beings [continued] to the present day to be victims of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.”

The Conference affirmed that “racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, where they amount to racism and racial discrimination, constitute serious violations of, and obstacles to, the full enjoyment of all human rights and deny the self-evident truth that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, ... and are among the root causes of many internal and international conflicts, ... and the consequent forced displacement of populations.”

Firmly “rejecting any doctrine of racial superiority, along with theories that attempt to determine the existence of so-called distinct human races,” and reaffirming that “all peoples and individuals constitute one human family, rich in diversity” the Conference emphasized the need for “a global fight against racism, racial discrimination,

xenophobia and related intolerance and all their abhorrent and evolving forms and manifestations” and called this “a matter of priority for the international community.” The Conference also proposed a programme of action designed to address the scourge of racism that continues to be evident today.

Since that conference, further action has been taken in the scientific community to help consolidate the gains contingent upon the rejection of the alleged scientific foundation for the idea of a firm link between biology and “race”.

In 2011, the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences issued its own Statement on Race and Racism in which it declared that:

All humans living today belong to a single species, *Homo sapiens*, and share a common descent. All living human populations have evolved from one common ancestral group over the same period of time. §1

For centuries, scholars have sought to comprehend patterns in nature by classifying living things. Attempts to classify human populations in this manner have been wholly misplaced... [H]umanity cannot be classified into discreet geographical categories on the basis of biological differences. §5

There is no necessary concordance between biological characteristics and culturally defined groups. §10

Eloise Meneses,<sup>78</sup> in her succinct summary of the basis of the rejection of the pseudoscience of race, presents three postulates. First, “human beings as a whole constitute a very narrow gene pool.... [O]ther species have far more variation than [humans] do.” Second, “most of the physical variation that does exist [among humans] is spread throughout the entire human population” and is not characteristic of any specific group within the population. Third, “slight variations between populations do not indicate race lines.... [Humans] are all genetically related. There are no pure stocks among us; nor have there ever been in the past.” Meneses concludes that “in the biological world” “there is no such thing, nor has there ever been,” such a thing “as race.”<sup>79</sup>

The alleged scientific basis for the notion of biological race has been rejected by most scientists, sociologists and anthropologists, many of whom have helped clarify that race is a socially constructed identity. It does not correspond to any set of biological features which were once used as a basis for dividing humankind into different racial groupings. It is now generally affirmed that biologically there is only one race – the human race. And the “races” we have reified are social constructs that are not based on biology, but represent a strategy of dominant ethnic groups that wish to assert their superiority over others. The existence of so-called “races” is highly contested.

Not surprisingly, when the World Council of Churches, deliberated on the subject of race and racism at its fourth assembly in 1968 – and the Council did this in the context of the discussion on race that was taking place in the international community – it identified the features of racism as follows:

- ethnocentric pride in one's own racial group,
- preference for the [alleged] distinguishing characteristics of that group,
- belief that these group characteristics are fundamentally biological in nature and are transmitted to succeeding generations
- strong negative feelings towards other groups who do not share the defining characteristics of their group, and
- efforts to discriminate against and exclude the outgroup from full participation in the life of the community.<sup>80</sup>

Unfortunately, all the clarifying statements about race have not succeeded in eliminating the problem of racism. Not surprisingly, therefore, we are focusing on the subject of race in this lecture. Because racism is a problem as much within the church community as outside of it, I end this lecture with some action items that are grounded in the faith of the church that could revolutionize the way the church deals with the subject of race. Deconstructing the notion of race and, animated by the renewed commitment to implement the action items that I will identify, the church may register further progress on the road to truly loving others following the pattern Jesus has taught and exemplified.

### **Looking toward the Future**

The association of biology and race constitutes the very foundation of the problem of race and racist ideology. This ideology is a human creation designed both to make inequality between people appear to be inborn and to reinforce the belief that it is part of the taken-for-granted landscape of human life. If Christians today are to come to terms with the serious problem reflected in the popular understanding of race, some important steps need to be taken. I mention briefly four of these steps that are rooted in a Trinitarian framework that issues into what I regard as a responsible theological anthropology. In light of these, I will suggest that the churches initiate a specific action to help it overcome its apathy on issues of race.

First, the church needs to expose a fundamental misunderstanding of the divine nature that undergirds the ideology of race. This is the error of segregating human freedom from its foundation and grounding in divine freedom. God, by whose own volition, the world was created and, in whose providence, human beings are entrusted with the stewardship of creation, has endowed humankind with the gift of freedom. In sovereign freedom, God bestows liberty on human beings whom God has made and God wills that that liberty be respected. The denial of the freedom that rightly belongs to each human



being represents a rejection of the divine design for creation. As Noel Erskine has said, “Whenever the church fails to make the connection between divine freedom and human freedom, it supports and gives its blessings to vicious structures of oppression in our world.”<sup>81</sup>

Commenting on the biblical narrative of creation, Dwight Hopkins has explained that “God breathed the Spirit of liberation, the Spirit to be free, into the very act of creation itself ... (Gen 2:7)”<sup>82</sup> The freedom each human being receives is “the freedom inherent in God’s own self.”<sup>83</sup> The gift of freedom entails freedom:

to enjoy all of God’s work without ... external negative restraints of any kind. In sum, human beings were brought into existence to be in equal relationship at each stage of their interactions.... God implanted liberation in the created human beings ... [so that] this liberation may be enacted on the everyday and ordinary levels of existence.”<sup>84</sup>

To deny human beings the capacity freely to exercise their liberty is to fly in the face of the creator who is the giver of freedom. The church needs to rediscover and acknowledge the link between divine freedom and human freedom and place this link at the centre of its discourse on what it means to be a part of the creation that God has made.

Second, Christians may need to intentionally re-engage the **Christocentric faith** that highly values what God has accomplished for the salvation of the world through the sacrifice of Christ. This is an important requirement if we are to come to terms with, and to develop the resolve to work consistently to overcome, the serious problem that inheres in a biological understanding of “race”.

When we allow our God-given freedom to be contaminated by distorted understandings, false pride or the pursuit of power, sin is at work in humankind. When, through his life, death and resurrection, Jesus Christ secures victory over sin, God swings the door wide open for the renewal and re-invigoration of what it means to be truly human. God enables people to see the self and the other as equally valid expressions of God’s mysterious action in creation and redemption. Then, the way of the follower of Christ will reflect the grammar of that mutual respect and *agape* love that are perfectly inhospitable to any claim of inherent superiority of one person over another. Our Christocentric faith derives from Christ’s action in breaking down the walls that separate people from one another, releasing them for the wholesome enjoyment of *ubuntu*.

In a *White Paper* on Welfare, the South African government in 1996 expressed its understanding of *ubuntu* in the following terms. *Ubuntu* is:

the principle of caring for each other's well-being... and a spirit of mutual support.... Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her

relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.<sup>85</sup>

In the perspective of *ubuntu*, a trinitarian Christocentric faith will not accommodate the negative images of others, and of otherness, that we create and utilize as identity markers that serve to galvanize our feelings of superiority over others. Instead, we will assign to each – and to all persons – the primary identity of a human being. With fellow Christians we will affirm our shared identity in Jesus Christ.

People have an incredible capacity for inventing identities for groups of people belonging to other cultures. We call them barbarians, savages, infidels, pagans, heathen, unenlightened, children, aboriginals or natives, and we construct these identities in order to maintain dominance over them in patronizing ways. With a truly Christocentric faith, we are capable of imagining how human diversity finds a safe home within the one mystical body of Christ where no one is demeaned or disrespected and all who confess Christ are welcome at the Table of life.<sup>86</sup>

It is supremely in Jesus Christ, who is the icon of the invisible God, that one sees the full manifestation of the freedom bequeathed to all Christians. This freedom is marked by self-emptying love – the love that reaches out for the sake of the beloved, rather than as part of a utilitarian game pursued in search of personal honour, glory, or “success”. The selfless love that is part and parcel of our response to Christ is a strategy to secure the liberation of creation. Christocentric faith opens up space for covenantal partnerships geared toward the edification of all and aimed at the welfare of the whole community.

Third, a vital need exists for the rediscovery of the **pneumatological dimensions** of faithful Christian living. Only so will the church be ready to appropriate the power to discern the ways in which sin is at work in the structures and arrangements that serve the cause of human domination.

The Holy Spirit opens our understanding to our vocational obligation to live with the symphony of existential relatedness with God and with other human beings within the community of the whole creation. Enlivened by the Holy Spirit, human beings discern the contours of what Barbara Trepagnier calls “silent racism” – the unspoken racist thoughts and unacknowledged racist assumptions that inform the attitudes many people display, and that inform the stereotypes we invent and the institutions we develop.<sup>87</sup>

The Spirit alone can cleanse our minds enabling us to understand ways in which many of us are beneficiaries of institutional racism which, whether we like it or not, makes us complicit in the sin from whose perpetration we continue to reap privileges and benefits. It is the Holy Spirit who will help us detect what Charles Mills calls *The Racial*

*Contract* that is presupposed by the social contractarianism that informs, and is implicit in, much of our contemporary political discourse and arrangements.<sup>88</sup>

Jürgen Moltmann caught a glimpse of the freedom the Holy Spirit brings when he referred to the church as “a fellowship of the free”. It is “an order of freedom” in which, as he said, “people are freed from the oppression which separates them from others” and frees them “for free fellowship with one another”.<sup>89</sup> In this community, the negative identities we construct for ourselves and for others cannot stand in the light of the new reality God calls the church to unveil before the world. In this reality, each person appears as a child of God with the heritage of that freedom which is given in Christ. As a community living under the reign of Christ, where the pernicious forces of this world have been undermined and the cruel powers dethroned, the church becomes, in the words of Moltmann, “the fellowship of Christ through faith and hope, discipleship and new fellowship” manifesting what it means to be freed by Christ. A rediscovery both of the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of Christ-followers and of the process of sanctification in a believer’s life is of vital importance for the living out of the loving relations that should characterize the Christian community.

Fourth, contemporary Christians need to read the Bible with eyes wide open so as to be able to discern, against the grain of some dominant readings, the radical importance of the creation of humankind in the image of God. The living out of the faith on the bedrock of an informed and defensible **theological anthropology** is the *sine qua non* of genuine Christian discipleship. By reading the scriptures in the key of this rounded theological anthropology that “interrogates what people are created and called to be and to do,”<sup>90</sup> several challenges may be met and overcome.

First, one will be disposed to reject the heretical claims regarding enslavement of black people as just payment for the sin of Ham.<sup>91</sup> Second, one’s approach will thoroughly undermine the claims of those who make the Creator culpable for the racist ideology that denies the equal dignity of all human beings created by the one God. Racists accomplish this by claiming that the instinct to regard others as inferior to oneself is consistent with divine providence. This applies especially to white people who are inheritors of what Caroline Redfearn describes as “the theological racism that humanity was originally White.”<sup>92</sup> Third, those who read Scripture through the lens of a mature theological anthropology will be led to identify with the thoroughgoing critique of social injustice in the tradition of the great prophets of ancient Israel and to embrace, with joyful abandon, Jesus’ ethic of radical love of neighbour. As J. Kameron Carter has pointed out, Christ followers need to engage the creative theological imagination that makes possible a reading of Scripture “against, rather than within, the social order.”<sup>93</sup> When this way of reading Scripture is pursued, the sharp edges of the dagger of racism will be rendered useless against the bedrock of informed faith.

In the light of all that has been said, may I assert that perhaps we now need to determine whether a *status confessionis* has arrived in relation to any church congregation that denies that racism is sin, that refuses to affirm that those Christians who practise and defend it are compromising their standing in Christ, and that refrains from taking concrete and decisive action to root out racism from its life. By not participating in the struggle to overcome racism, such a congregation has turned its back on the truth of the Gospel and has become a pseudo-church.

It was in his profound disappointment with the church under Nazi Germany, and more specifically, with the watering down of the first draft of the Bethel Confession,<sup>94</sup> that Dietrich Bonhoeffer called attention to *status confessionis*. This idea refers to the existence of a situation that threatens to destroy the integrity of the church's confession of faith. Such a situation demands a restatement of the faith that inevitably includes a distinction between 'true' and 'false' Church.<sup>95</sup>

By invoking the *status confessionis*, the church declares that Christians and churches defending a position that is profoundly unchristian are guilty of heresy. This means that the ecclesial proponents and defenders of seriously flawed socio-political and ethical beliefs are seen to be disqualifying themselves from participation in the wider family of Christ's church. They can no longer be regarded as churches in the true sense because they have forsaken, and are living in corporate betrayal of, the true gospel and its just demands.<sup>96</sup>

At least two Christian World Communions applied the concept of *status confessionis* in their relation to apartheid. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) took this action in 1977 and the World Alliance (now World Communion) of Reformed Churches (WCRC) did the same in 1982.<sup>97</sup> This development was occasioned by the crisis created by the attitude of certain churches to apartheid. Through their support and defence of institutional racism, the Dutch Reform Church in South Africa, for example, jeopardized the integrity of the Gospel and rejected solidarity with the body of Christ.<sup>98</sup>

I urge that the drastic action of declaring that a *status confessionis* has arrived in relation to certain churches, that is, certain church congregations, is needed in our times. National ecclesial communions need to declare a *status confessionis* in relation to their member churches, that is, their member congregations that practise racism and endorse racist ideology. The reason I make this appeal is that the problem of racism has proven to be intractable. The responsiveness of sections of the church community to the ubiquity of racism has been sluggish. Ecclesial inaction, in the face of the religious, social, political and economic consequences of racism, has devastating consequences for the witness of the church and the integrity of the gospel it preaches. The inaction of some church congregations is too disastrous to be ignored. Every congregation has an obligation to play its part in loosening the mortar cementing the brickwork of prejudice and hate. Drastic action needs to be taken that obliges each church congregation to take

a stand and that warns every ecclesial congregation of the inadmissible compromise that is inherent in inaction on the racism front.

Perhaps, the four steps I have identified and the suggestion I have made for the church's resolute action against racism will not adequately respond to Willie Jennings' call for a radical transformation of the Christian imagination that would evince a reconfiguration of living spaces into locations where people can imagine new ways of connecting with each other and desire new patterns of social joining. I hope, however, that what I have suggested would contribute to that understanding of life together that is consistent with the church's vision of the kingdom of God.<sup>99</sup>

Should the deconstruction of our racialized worldview be achieved, it will be possible for the churches to develop the capacity to envision a new social order in which inequalities based on assumptions of "race" no longer prevail within the ecclesial community. It will be possible for the churches to exhibit their commitment to realize in themselves, in others, and in our world the joy of loving as Jesus did, of sharing and caring as Jesus did, and of bearing compelling witness to life in community marked by oneness with Christ. Then, churches will launch out into a world in which all people, created in the image of God, may learn from them not only how to live in peace with justice, but also how to engage in fierce competition to outdo one another in showing honour and extending a hand of selfless love to each other.

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1 Part 5, in *Social and Political Philosophy: Readings from Plato to Ghandi* Edited by John Somerville and Ronald Santoni (New York: Anchor Books, 1963), 64 and 65. Ivan Hannaford has claimed that Aristotle's ideas on slavery have been "grossly misinterpreted and overplayed". He believes that generations of scholars have attributed to the Greeks and Roman racial attitudes they did not possess. See his *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1996). See especially Part II of the book. Cf. Benjamin Isaac's assignment of the designation "proto-racism" to forms of prejudice in classical antiquity. See his *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004) and his essay "Racism: A Rationalization of Prejudice in Greece and Rome" in *Origins of Racism in the West*. Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 32-56.

<sup>2</sup> Euripides, *Iphigenia in Aulis*, 1400-1401, available at [http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/iphi\\_aul.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Euripides/iphi_aul.html)

<sup>3</sup> On Marcus Garvey's life, see, for example, Rupert Lewis and Patrick Bryan, *Garvey: His Work and Impact* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1994); Amy Garvey, Editor. *The Political Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey or Africa for the Africans 1923* (Dover, Mass: The Majority Press, 1986) and Bob Blaisdell, Editor *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey* (Dover, Mass: Dover Publications, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> *Declaration to the Word* by the Second Pan-African Congress of 1921 cited in William E. B. DuBois *The World and Africa*. New York: International Publishers, 1964 ed.): 238.

<sup>5</sup> Eloise Hiebert Meneses, "Science and the Myth of Biological Race" in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* Robert Priest and Alvaro Nieves, Editors. (New York; Oxford University Press, 2007), 35

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- <sup>6</sup> Charles Hirschman “The Origins and Demise of the Conception of Race”, *Population and Development Review* 30 (2)2004, 401 cited in *Origins of Racism in the West* Edited by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac and Joseph Ziegler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009),7-8.
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder: Westview, 1988), 63-64.
- <sup>8</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003).
- <sup>9</sup> Cited in Vincent Parillo, *Understanding Race and Ethnic Relations* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 17; *Cicero Letters to Atticus with an English Translation by E.O Winstedt, MA, of Magdalen College, Oxford* (London: William Heinemann Ltd. & Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1918). Available online at <http://archive.org/stream/letterstoatticuswins03ciceuoft#page/n7/mode/2up>.
- <sup>10</sup> Cited in James Flynn, *Race, IQ and Jansen* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 217.
- <sup>11</sup> In the aftermath of World War II, many students from the Caribbean travelled to Britain to further their studies. Eugenia Charles, Michael Manley, Milton Cato and Errol Barrow, future Prime Ministers in the Caribbean were among them. Also among them were future outstanding UWI professors such as Douglas Hall, Michael Smith, Roy Augier and Lloyd Braithwaite. See Gladstone Mills, “Foreword” to Lloyd Braithwaite, *Colonial West Indian Students in Britain* (Mona; University of the West Indies Press, 2001), vi-xii.
- <sup>12</sup> William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade* (London: 1754), 160-161, cited in Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London; Andre Deutsch, 1964), 50.
- <sup>13</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 68. Cf. Paul Lauren’s comments on Bristol, Liverpool, and Nantes in *Power and Prejudice*, 17.
- <sup>14</sup> William Snelgrave, *A New Account of Some Parts of Guinea and the Slave Trade* (London: 1754), 160-161, cited in Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London; Andre Deutsch, 1964), 50.
- <sup>15</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London; Andre Deutsch, 1964): 81-82.
- <sup>16</sup> Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 82.
- <sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Donnan, Editor *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade in America* (Washington, D.C.. 1930-1935) II, 609, cited in Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*, 84.
- <sup>18</sup> See *Boswelliana, The Commonplace Book of J. Boswell, with a Memoir and Annotations*. Charles Rogers, Editor (London: The Grampian Club, 1876): 116.
- <sup>19</sup> From Boswell’s 1791 poem, “No Abolition of Slavery; or the Universal Empire of Love”. See Marcus Wood, Editor. *The Poetry of Slavery: An Anglo-American Anthology, 1764-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 193. Interestingly, In *Busha’s Mistress*, said to be a fictional novel, an enslaved woman named Catherine replied to an invitation to return home in the following words; “De grave is de home for such as we.” See Verene Shepherd, “‘Petticoat Rebellion’?: Women in Emancipation” in *Emancipation: The Lessons and the Legacy* Editor. Hopeton Dunn (Kingston: Arawak Publications, 2007), 120.
- <sup>20</sup> Paul Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 91.
- <sup>21</sup> Paul Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 102.
- <sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most comprehensive bibliography on Sam Sharpe is available in Delroy Reid-Salmon, *Burning for Freedom: A Theology of the Black Atlantic Struggle for Liberation* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2012).
- <sup>23</sup> No one really knows how many Africans were transported from their continent for enslavement in the Caribbean and the Americas. Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), estimates that, between 1492 and 1870, that the number was some eleven million. Basil Davidson, *The African Slave Trade – A Revised and Expanded Edition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980): 95-100 (+271) suggests the estimated number was twenty million. Walter Rodney estimates that 15 million enslaved Africans reached the American continent and the Caribbean, but suggests that, adding those killed in Africa “in the process of obtaining people for enslavement and those who died on board the slave ships when crossing the Atlantic ocean, the numbers are more likely forty to fifty million. (See his *West Africa and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Dar es Salaam: East African Publishing House, 1967), 6; It appears that the figure of 15 million is increasingly being found to be acceptable among many researchers.

- <sup>24</sup> Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd, *Trading Souls: Europe's Transatlantic Trade in Africans, A Bicentennial Caribbean Reflection* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 2007), xxii, cited in Cawley Bolt, "The Slave Trade and the Unholy Triangle: A Caribbean Perspective" in *Baptist Faith and Witness Book 4*. Edited by Fausto Vasconcelos, Falls Church: Baptist World Alliance, 2011), 49.
- <sup>25</sup> Bleby *Death Struggles*, 118 cited in Winston Lawson, *Religion and Race: African and European Roots in Conflict – A Jamaican Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 159.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Baptist Reporter, July 1864: 305* cited in Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete*, 106.
- <sup>27</sup> From the *Belmore Papers*, cited in Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete*, 106-107.
- <sup>28</sup> Delroy Reid Salmon, *Burning for Freedom: A Theology of the Black Atlantic Struggle for Liberation* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2012).
- <sup>29</sup> See William St. Clair, *The Door of No Return: The History of the Cape Coast Castle and the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: BlueBridge, 2007). Earlier the book appeared in the United Kingdom as *The Grand Slave Emporium* (Profile Books, 2006).
- <sup>30</sup> On the Castle, see William St. Clair, *The Door of No Return*.
- <sup>31</sup> Barry Higman explains how the slaveholders included enslaved persons, livestock and machines in their inventory. *Slave Population and Economy in Jamaica, 1807-1834*, (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago: The University Press, 1995): 1-5. Orlando Patterson has refused to identify commodification as the defining mark of slavery, preferring loss of freedom as the primary index. See his *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982). At his death, the jury estimated Sam Sharpe's value at £16.10. See C.S. Reid, *Samuel Sharpe: From Slave to National Hero* (Kingston: Bustamante Institute of Public Affairs, 1988).
- <sup>32</sup> William Knibb, British Parliamentary Papers, XX (721), 246, cited in Braithwaite, 15.
- <sup>33</sup> See Neville Callam, "Hope: A Caribbean Perspective" *Ecumenical Review* 50, no. 2 (April 1998): 137-142.
- <sup>34</sup> *Scenes in the Caribbean Sea: Being Sketches from a Missionary's Notebook (London, 1854)*, 51 cited in Devon Dick, *The Cross and the Machete*, 107.
- <sup>35</sup> Delroy Reid Salmon, "Faith and the Gallows: The Cost of Liberation" in *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*. Editor Anthony Reddie (Surrey and Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2010), 151-165.
- <sup>36</sup> Reid-Salmon, "Faith and the Gallows," 153.
- <sup>37</sup> See, for example, Orlando Patterson, *Freedom in the Making of Western Culture* (New York: Basic Books, 1991; Gad Heuman and Trevor Burnard, Editors. *The Routledge History of Slavery* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and the four-volume history of slavery published by Cambridge University press in 2011 and 2012 as the *Cambridge World History of Slavery*. Volume 1 deals with The Ancient Mediterranean World; Volume 2 - AD 500-1420; Volume 3 - AD 1420-AD 1804; Volume 4 - 1804-2000.
- <sup>38</sup> For the brief discussion on the evolution of slavery in Europe, we draw extensively on two works, namely, Richard Hart, *Slaves Who Abolished Slavery*, Volume 1, *Blacks in Bondage* (Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, 1980), 1-20, and James Sweet, "The Iberian Roots of American Racist Thought" *William and Mary Quarterly*, 51 no. 1 (January 1997): 143 - 166.
- <sup>39</sup> "The Iberian Roots of Racist Thought" *William and Mary Quarterly*. Vol. LIV, No. 1 (January 1997), 143-166.
- <sup>40</sup> "The Iberian Roots," 145-146.
- <sup>41</sup> Hart, *Slaves who Abolished Slavery*, 19.
- <sup>42</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1982). Patterson characterizes slavery as an extreme form of "personal domination," the enslaved being under the direct power of another. It represented a form of excommunication - the enslaved being denied independent social existence - with the enslaved being alienated from all rights and obligations related to their birth and their blood relations.
- <sup>43</sup> G. Gilbert to Governor. CO/137/155 (21 October 1823), 62, cited in Dave St. A. Gosse, "The Impact of the Haitian Revolution and Emancipation in Jamaica" in *Emancipation: The Lessons and the Legacy* Editor. Hopeton Dunn (Kingston: Arawak Publications, 2007), 183.
- <sup>44</sup> *Race: The History of an Idea in the West* (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Press, 1996), 187.
- <sup>45</sup> James Sweet, "The Iberian Roots," 165.
- <sup>46</sup> Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 420.
- <sup>47</sup> "Of National Characters" 3.249 (1748) cited in *Race: The History of an Idea*, 215)

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- <sup>48</sup> *Of National Characters*, 3.257 in *Race: The History of an Idea*, 216.
- <sup>49</sup> "Of National Characters" in *The Philosophical Works of David Hume, Volume 3*. Edited by T Green and T Grose (London: Longmans, Green, 1886), 252. Also published as David Hume, *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*. In Two Volumes (London and Edinburgh, 1777), vol. 1, 550.
- <sup>50</sup> Whether or not Hume was responding to James Beattie's demolition of his claim concerning people who were not white, (On this, see Aaron Garrett has said in his essay on "Hume's Revised Racism" (*Hume Studies* XXVI, no 1 (April 2000): 171-177) Hume never succeeded in denying he had expressed a racist opinion.
- <sup>51</sup> *Regular Gradation of Man, and in Different Animals and Vegetables* (London: Dilly, 1799), 134, cited in Paul Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 21.
- <sup>52</sup> "Occasional Discourses on the Negro Question" *Fraser's Magazine* 40 (December 1849); 670-679. <http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/carlyle/occasion.htm>
- <sup>53</sup> *The Races of Man: A Fragment* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1850), Accessible at [http://books.google.com/books?id=XwQXAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](http://books.google.com/books?id=XwQXAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)
- <sup>54</sup> *The Races of Man*, 13.
- <sup>55</sup> *The Races of Man*, 14
- <sup>56</sup> *The Races of Man*, 149
- <sup>57</sup> *The Races of Man*, 151.
- <sup>58</sup> *The Races of Man*, 162
- <sup>59</sup> *The Races of Man*, 163.
- <sup>60</sup> *The Races of Man*, 10. Emphasis added.
- <sup>61</sup> From the University of Uppsala's *Linné on Line* accessed on August 13, 2013 at: [http://www.linnaeus.uu.se/online/life/8\\_3.html](http://www.linnaeus.uu.se/online/life/8_3.html).
- <sup>62</sup> See his *Systema Naturae*, 1735. On his pseudo-scientific contribution to the understanding of race, see, for example, Bloise Meneses, "Science and the Myth of Biological Race" in Robert Priest and Alvaro Nieves, Editors. *This Side of Heaven*, 33-46.
- <sup>63</sup> In Hannaford's words, Linnaeus divided humankind into "White European, Red American, Dark Asiatic, and Black Negro." See his *Race: The History*, 204.
- <sup>64</sup> The 1977 edition of the work is available online at: [http://www.blumenbach.info/\\_/De\\_Generis\\_humani\\_1st\\_Ed.html](http://www.blumenbach.info/_/De_Generis_humani_1st_Ed.html).
- <sup>65</sup> *On the Natural Varieties of Mankind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1795 (New York: Bergman, 1969 reprint), 269, cited in Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 21.
- <sup>66</sup> See Hannaford, 207-213.
- <sup>67</sup> On Jean Cuvier, popularly called Georges Cuvier, see, for example, Stephen Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*. Revised and Expanded. (New York: Norton and Co., 1996), 63-74. See also Ivan Hannaford, *Race: The History of an Idea*, 256-257.
- <sup>68</sup> Hannaford, 17.
- <sup>69</sup> Hannaford, 17.
- <sup>70</sup> *Peacemaking*, 1919. Boston:Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933): 145.
- <sup>71</sup> Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, 106; David Miller, *The Drafting of the Covenant* (New York: Putnam, 1928) I:116)
- <sup>72</sup> Lauren, chap 3. Thankfully, at the UN General Assembly meeting in Paris, December 1948, delegates were able to agree to work toward producing a Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- <sup>73</sup> For the UNESCO statements on race, see UNESCO, *Four Statements on the Race Question* (Paris: Unesco, 1969). The text is available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001229/122962eo.pdf>
- <sup>74</sup> Preamble to the Declaration, whose full text was published by the United Nations in *Human Rights: A Compilation of International Instruments of the United Nations*, (New York: United Nations, 1973), 22 and is widely available.
- <sup>75</sup> See note 49 above.
- <sup>76</sup> The Statement is available at: <http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm>.
- <sup>77</sup> The text is accessible at <http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>
- <sup>78</sup> "Science and the Myth of Biological Race" in Robert Priest and Alvaro Nieves, Editors. *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and the Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35-39. See



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also, for example, Dave Unander, *Shattering the Myth of Race: Genetic Realities and Biblical Truths* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2000) 43-61.

<sup>79</sup> For a fuller exposition of the myth of biological race, see Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) and David Unander, *Shattering the Myth of Race* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000).

<sup>80</sup> Norman Goodall, Editor. *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official Report of the Fourth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala, July 4-20, 1968* (Geneva: WCC, 1968), 241.

<sup>81</sup> Noel Erskine, *Decolonizing Theology: A Caribbean Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981), 119. In a recent paper, "Prophetic of Freedom Soon Come": Reflections on Sam Sharpe, Religion, Freedom and Jamaica at Fifty," Jamaican theologian, Anna Perkins has emphasized the importance of "enfleshing on social life" Sam Sharpe's "religious ideal of freedom." The paper was delivered at the Sam Sharpe Conference in Kingston on December 1, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over: Slave Religion and Black Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 239.

<sup>83</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over*, 239

<sup>84</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Down, Up and Over*, 240-241

<sup>85</sup> South African Government Gazette, 02/02/1996. On *ubuntu*, see, for example, Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Random House, 1999); Joe Teffo, *The Concept of Ubuntu as a Cohesive Moral Value* (Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 1994); Joe Teffo, *Towards a Conceptualization of Ubuntu*. Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 1994; W. J. Ndaba, *Ubuntu in Comparison to Western Philosophies* (Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 1994); Attie Van Niekerk, *Ubuntu and Religion*. (Pretoria: Ubuntu School of Philosophy, 1994); Wim. Van Binsbergen, "Ubuntu and the Globalisation of Southern African Thought and Society." *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* XV (1-2), 2001, 53-89; and Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 1997).

<sup>86</sup> See Paul Hiebert, "Western Images of Others and Otherness" in Robert Priest and Alvaro Nieves, Editors, *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 97-110.

<sup>87</sup> *Silent Racism: How Well-Meaning White People Perpetuate the Racial Divide* Expanded Edition (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2010)

<sup>88</sup> See Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1997).

<sup>89</sup> *The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit: A Contribution to the Messianic Ecclesiology* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1975), 291-294.

<sup>90</sup> Dwight Hopkins, *Being Human: Race, Culture, and Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 161.

<sup>91</sup> On this, see, for example: David Goldenberg, *The Curse of Ham: Race and Slavery in early Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) and Jennifer Glaney, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006) and Emanuel McCall, *When God's Children Get Together: A Memoir of Race* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2007). It is interesting to note that noted international lawyer, Hugo Grotius once stated that: "By the law of nature, in its primeval state, apart from human institutions and customs, no men can be slaves; and it is in this sense that legal writers maintain the opinion that slavery is repugnant to nature. Yet, in a former part of this treatise, it was shewn that there is nothing repugnant to natural justice, in deriving the origin of servitude from human actions, whether founded upon compact or crime." *De jure belli et pacis*. See Book 2 Chapter 5 and Book 3, chapter 7, translated by Louise Loomis and published in New York by Black in 1949.

<sup>92</sup> "A Legacy of Slavery – Black with the Slaves or Mulatto with the Slavers? An English Jamaican Theological Reflection on the Trajectories of 'Mixed Race Categories'" in *Black Theology, Slavery and Contemporary Christianity*. Edited by Anthony Reddie (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2010), 140.

<sup>93</sup> J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 233.

<sup>94</sup> This is the confession that was drafted in 1933 by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Georg Merz, Hermann Sasse, and others. It was an effort to confess the Christian faith in the midst of a situation when Christian solidarity with the Jewish people was seriously in question.

<sup>95</sup> John De Gruchy, *Daring, Trusting Spirit: Bonhoeffer's Friend Eberhard Bethge* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 9. See also John De Gruchy and Charles Villa-Vicencio, Editors. *Apartheid is Heresy* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1983).

<sup>96</sup> See, for example, Neville Richardson, "Apartheid, Heresy and the Church in South Africa" *The Journal of Religious Ethics*. Vol. 14, No. 1 (Spring, 1986), 1-21; Lennart Henricksson, *A Journey with a Status*

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Confessionis. Analysis of an apartheid related conflict between the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, 1982-1998 (*Uppsala: Swedish institute of Missionary Research, 2010*); Henry Hamann "Status Confessionis" in *A Lively Legacy: Essays in Honor of Robert Preus*, Kurt E. Marquart John R. Stephenson Bjarne W. Teigen, Editors. (Fort Wayne, Ind. : Concordia Theological Seminary, c1985), 40 ff. Also available at:

<http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/HamannApartheidandSTATUSCONFESSIONIS.pdf>; and Peter Lodberg, "Apartheid as a Church Dividing Issue," *The Ecumenical Review*, Volume 48. No. 2 (April 1996), 173-177. The notion of *status confessionis* has deep roots in the Reformation.

<sup>97</sup> The LWF decision was made at their sixth assembly in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, in June 1977 and the WARC's affirmation was issued at their General Council in Ottawa, Canada, in August 1982. At their Assembly in Debrecen, Hungary, in 1997, WARC had initiated a *processus confessionis* in a last push to educate the churches on such issues as economic justice prior to the declaration of a *status confessionis*.

<sup>98</sup> See J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2005), 88-89. In 1956, twenty-one years before the LWF arrived at its decision, English Anglican bishop Trevor Huddleston had declared that "racialism" in any form is an "inherent blasphemy" against the nature of God who has created human beings in God's own image and that the Calvinism espoused by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa as "sub-Christian" "like all heresies and deviations from Catholic truth ... is sub-Christian". 5 *Naught for Your Comfort* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956). Of course, from its inaugural Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, WCC had declared that "Anti-semitism is sin against God and man." This was an early indication that the ecumenical body would not be unwilling to declare itself in *status confessionis* with regard to a serious social issue with deep moral implications. See *Man's Disorder and God's Design: The Amsterdam Assembly Series* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1949); Jeffrey Gros, "Eradicating Racism: A Central Agenda for the Faith and Order Movement" in *Ecumenical Review*, Volume 47, No. 1 (January 1995), 42-51; and Hugh McCullum, "Racism and Ethnicity" in *A History of the Ecumenical Movement Volume 3, 1968-2000*, Edited by John Briggs, Mercy Oduyoye and George Tsetsis (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2004), 345-372. Since 2000, important developments on the racism front have taken place in WCC, including significant work in Faith and Order, in the CWME, and through the Central Committee. WCC's official participation in the UN-sponsored World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa in 2001, and the recent Doorn Conference in Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 2009, and in the 2010 Cleveland Conference on Racism Today express what appears to be a renewed effort to assert WCC's seriousness regarding the problem of racism that persists despite all the efforts to overcome it.

<sup>99</sup> See Willie Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2010). Jennings alleges the replacement of race with a "place and place-centered identity" that keeps "renewing with each generation of race-formed children." He does not believe the elimination of race is what is needed, but instead a new order in which boundary-defying relationships will mark the new living spaces created by a new order that hosts "different ways of life that announce invitations for joining."