**The Impact of the White Washing of Christianity on the Church’s Unity**

**By Dr. Victor Clay**

**Introduction:** Christian Scholarship has rarely acknowledged that people of color had significant roles in both Scripture and the early church. Over the centuries, primarily white historians have whitewashed Christian history, making it seem like a faith founded and perpetuated by white Europeans. This has led many black people, as well as other people/ethnic groups to question whether they have any place in American Christianity/Church – this has pushed many to seek belonging in heretic identity groups outside of the church.

 While this is historically true, the solution is not to go to the other extreme and black wash the Church/Christianity. “Reflecting unity by means of the Gospel” requires reflecting biblical truth even on this issue.

**Galatians 3:28 Colossians 3:5-11**

**Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:1-13 Acts 13:1-2**

**Acts 2:7-13 John 17:20-26**

**Romans 12:1-2 Romans 3:27-31; Chapter 4**

The Church and Christian institutions refusing to address this subject has helped to perpetuate the white Jesus and black Jesus myths, and to portray the Christian faith as one largely influenced by European people and culture. [Illustration: “The light shining through stain glass windows.]

Jerome Day quote: “When thousands of black and brown people are turning away from the faith in part due to the perpetuation of a white Jesus, we must ask: Why? When an entire faith is misrepresented, we must ask: why? When whitewashing eclipses the core message of the gospel, we must examine why white Jesus is the only Jesus most people know. Whitewashing has tainted the Christian faith.” 1

**I. Defining the Term “Whitewashing.”**

 The Cambridge Dictionary defines whitewashing as “an attempt to stop people from finding out the true facts about a subject or situation.”2 “It is an attempt to hide facts in order to control a narrative.”3

 An example of whitewashing is the use of white people to represent people of color in film and history. The version of Christianity that has been presented to us in the west for centuries is largely void of any ethnic diversity. This is a sinful problem!

 Whitewashed Christianity refers to the affinity of white Christian scholars to dominate the Bibles, Christian art, literature, and history with white people at the expense of authentic ethnicity and true scholarship in order to resonate most deeply with the experiences, presuppositions, and worldviews of white audiences.4

 Another term related to the concept of whitewashing is “eurocentrism.” This is placing the experiences, culture, and philosophy of people of European descent at the center of personal understanding of culture and behavior. Essentially, its making what is “white” or “European” universal. (What is it called when blacks do this?) It is just as sinful and damaging when blacks or any other group does the same thing! **(Romans Chapter 3-4; 4:9-12, 16-18)**

 “Many so-called ‘Bible-believing’ evangelical seminaries have a long history of discrimination against African Americans. And to this day, When teaching church history, some of these schools ignore the church in Ethiopia, Egypt, India, Persia, and other nations of color, acting as if they did not exist. They have taught, and still teach, European church history as the only church history. This is literally a whitewashing of Christianity.
 But it’s more than that. True biblical Christianity is not the white man’s religion, the Black man’s religion, or any man’s religion. It is God’s way of salvation for all mankind. It is God’s work, period. For it to be presented as the religion of any single race, for it to be whitewashed, is idolatry.”5

 “Evan’s explained that elevating anything – identity, race, or national allegiance – above Christianity ‘is idolatry,’ and ‘whenever that national allegiance causes you to have non-Christian perspectives, underneath the flag, then what you have done is you’ve created a national ideal that God must resist, reject, and judge.’”6

**II. Why must we confront whitewashing?**

 Because of the growing sentiment among people of African descent, as well as around the world, and here in America that Christianity is a Western-centered, European influenced, white-owned expression of faith.

 This is Biblically and historically inaccurate, but as we saw in the video there are reasons why people have adopted this view. The gospel is rooted historically and biblically in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia long before reaching Western shores.

 “In order to present the Gospel and Christian faith accurately, we must understand that Christianity is not the cultural, intellectual, or theological property of any single ethnic group, but exists as a “Body” of chosen redeemed people made up of every nation, tribe, and language.

 (It is an editing of the Bible and God’s redemptive story.)

**III. The dangers of whitewashing.**

 1. Whitewashing is **dishonest**.

 One tactic of whitewashing has been to intentionally remove any African or other ethnic group’s influence from the presentation of Christianity and its history. “You will usually find almost every African church father and African martyr presented as a white man or woman.”7

 “Education about church history oftentimes starts with the Reformation in Europe instead of with Israel and Africa and this bypasses North African and Eastern influences.”8 [Origen, Augustine]

 2. Whitewashing is **deliberate**.

 A. The American and European versions of Christianity presented in America and around the world many times doesn’t acknowledge the ethnic diversity found in the Scriptures and in Christian history. Why? “Because it causes those who are happy with a whitewashed narrative to lose their power or control.”9

 B. It also allows those who profit to benefit . – Tomas Sowell

 Boooker T. Washington states: “There is another class of coloured people who make a business of keeping the troubles, the wrongs, and the hardships of the Negro race before the public. Having learned that they are able to make a living out of their troubles, they have grown into the settled habit of advertising their wrongs – partly because they want sympathy and partly because it pays. Some of these people do not want the Negro to lose his grievances, because they do not want to lose their jobs.”10

 3. Whitewashing is **destructive**.

 A. Consider that slave owners painted the Bible white in order to justify inhumane chattel slavery.

 B. Fallacies like the **curse** of Ham. (**Genesis 9:18-29**)

 C. Aristotle’s Climate **Theory**.

 D. It presents God as only using one group of people.

 E. It leaves people of color with questions about the role they play in God’s plan.

 F. It is a **hermeneutical** and **intellectual** lie to read white people on every page of Scripture, movies, art, Sunday School material, and Educational institutions, and wonder why people of color question if the Christian faith is a white man’s religion.

 G. It hand’s people of color over to Black Religious Identity Cults, known as (BRIC Cults).

 1. Black Hebrew Israelites

 2. National **Islam**

 3. Kemeticism

 4. Black Women and Feminism

 5. Black **Atheism**

 “As believers who value truth because the Lord we follow is the Truth, we cannot escape or evade the sad history that Christians played in the horrors of the slave trade. However, by painting a picture that ties the roots of both Christianity and racism to white Europeans, Muslims have been able to position Islam as the antithesis of the church when promoting themselves in the inner city. For blacks, especially during the 1950s, and 1960s, Islam represented a religious form of breaking free from the shackles of oppression and a casting off of their slave master’s faith.

 Religious movements such as the Nation of Islam, Five-Percenters, and the Black Hebrew Israelites sects have used the same racial separatist language to gain converts. Other groups like Egyptologists and members of the Moorish Science Temple go a step further and trace their origins back to the continent of Africa itself, creating a false sense of authenticity as to the true religion of African-American ancestors. But they all share as their overarching story line the superiority of the black race and that the root of all that is evil in the world can be mapped back to whites.

 However, in spite of this, many adherents to the aforementioned Black Nationalistic cults and religions still use these popular yet untenable arguments against Christianity.

 The myth that must be debunked is that Christianity is inherently white and racist. Contrary to the erroneous teachings of most Muslim ministers, the birthplace of the Christian faith is not Europe or Rome. Jesus and His earliest followers all called Jerusalem home. Christianity, at its foundation, is far more Middle Eastern and African than it is European. The most influential church fathers of the faith came from areas such as Alexandria in Egypt, Carthage in North Africa, and Antioch in Asia Minor. Men like Clement of Alexandria, Augustine, Tertullian, Athanasius, and Polycarp all had African blood running through their veins. As historian theologian Thomas C. Oden so boldly states in his book, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind*, ‘Despite this diversity there is a unified center for Christian teaching: the primitive African baptismal confession, which in time gained ecumenical confirmation.’”11

**IV. The solutions for whitewashing.**

 A. Confession

 B. Repentance

 C. Returning

 D. Reteaching

 1. Blacks in the Bible

 2. Black or People of Color in Church History

 3. Discernment on art, movies, educational material used.

 4. Cross ethnic and cultural partnerships developed.

 5. Multi-ethnic conversations.

**Recommended Reading:**

William Dwight McKissic, Sr, *Beyond Roots: In Search Of Blacks In The Bible*, Renaissance Productions, 1990, ISBN: 0-9625605-0-2

William Dwight McKissic, Sr. & Anthony T. Evans, *Beyond Roots II: If Anybody Ask You Who I Am A Deeper Look At Blacks In The Bible*, Renaissance Productions, 1994, ISBN: 0-9625605-5-3

John M. Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words To The Church On Race*, Moody Publisher, 2018, ISBN: 0-8024-1801-5

Dr. Ken Davis, Dr. Charles Ware, *Ferguson: How Should the Church Respond?*, The Journal of Ministry and Theology, Spring 2015, Crossroads Bible College

Jarvis J. Williams & Kevin M. Jones, *Removing The Stain Of Racism From The Southern Baptist Convention*, B&H Academic, 2017, ISBN:978-1-4336-4334-7

Mark DeYmaz & Oneya Fennell Okuwobi, *Multiethnic Conversations: An Eight-Week Journey Toward Unity In Your Church*, Wesleyan Publishing, 2016, ISBN: 978-1-63257-095-6

Ken Ham & A. Charles Ware, *Darwin’s Plantation: Evolution’s Racist Roots*, Master Books, 2007,

ISBN: 0-89051-497-6

John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian*, Crossway, 2011, ISBN: 1-4335-2852-5

Eric Mason (General Editor), *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity With the Gospel*, Zondervan, 2021

ISBN: 978-0-310-10094-2

Christopher W. Brooks, *Urban Apologetics: Why the Gospel is Good News For the City*, Kregel, 2014,

ISBN: 978-0-8254-4290-2

**Endnotes**

1Eric Mason, *Urban Apologetics: Restoring Black Dignity with the Gospel*, Zondervan, 2021, p. 14.

2Ibid. p.14.

3Ibid. p.14.

4Ibid. p.15.

5Chris Broussard, *The Whitewashing of Christianity*, by Jerome Gay, Jr., 2021, p.3.

6The Christian Post “Tony Evans says US Facing God’s Judgment because Christians are Cultural, not Biblical.” By Leah Marieann Klelt

7Mason, p.16.

8bid. p.16.

9Ibid. p.17.

10Booker T. Washington, *My Larger Education Being Chapters from My Experience*, Doubleday, Garden City, NY, 1910, p.118

11Christopher W. Brooks, *Urban Apologetics: Why The Gospel Is Good News For The City*, Kregel Publications, 2014, p.120-121